Lake of the Great Dismal

THE LAKE OF THE GREAT DISMAL

BY CHARLES FREDERICK STANSBURY

WITH A PREFACE BY DON MARQUIS

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TO MY FRIEND CAPTAIN WILLIAM R. BOUTWELL

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PREFACE

Charles Frederick Stansbury was born in London, England, on November 3, 1854; but his parents were Americans. He died in 1922, on the 12th of May.

It was my privilege to know him during the last eight or nine years of his life, and his was one of the most winsome and charming personalities I ever came in contact with. He had an invincible sweetness of nature, which ill health, disappointment, hard luck and the world's neglect could not vanquish. When I have felt down and out, over nothing at

all, he has cheered me up and made me ashamed of myself with his gentle humor and whimsicality. I think he was a melancholy man; but he never permitted his melancholy to depress his friends.

I speak of his ill luck and poor health and disappointment. One of the horrors of the profession of journalism is that so many able men outlive their success. They achieve success, they go along successfully for years, well and widely known, and then old age overtakes them; there is a gradual decline of the ability to produce speedily great quantities of “copy”; they lose their audiences; younger generations of writers, younger generations of readers come crowding along. One day they wake up to the sad viii fact that they and their honorable records have been forgotten by all but a few old timers. They have outlived most of their contemporaries and newer men (getting ready to tread the same road) do not know them at all. This is the story of the typical journalist; the story of ninety-nine of us out of every hundred.

“Stan,” as we used to call him along Park Row, achieved success, and was successful for many years, known and noted and successful; and in the end, age overtook him, and physical disabilities. During the last few years of his life the “pals” grew fewer and fewer who had companioned with him in his days of glory. A lot of newspaper veterans to whom this sort of thing happens are apt to turn into bores and grouches; but “Stan” never did. After his success he did not fall into failure; he went along with another kind of success, an unworldly sort of success; the success of an old man who has won the love and affection of his world to such an extent that they don't care a damn whether he has a dollar in his pocket or not.

Stansbury went to California at the age of twenty, and from there to Hawaii and to Samoa. From Samoa he went to Australia in 1879 where he went into newspaper work. He was editor and publisher of a weekly paper called *The Lantern* in Adelaide for four or five years, then he went to London; for two years he practiced his profession there, and in 1888 returned to the United States. He was a reporter, a ix special feature writer, an editorial

writer, a song writer and the author of many short stories and essays, numerous poems and a couple of novels. “Kittiwake,” published in 1912, I think is the best of his writings. It shows his style at its best; it shows his love of nature and his gentle whimsical humor. I think he might have been a naturalist, if he had followed one of his bents.

The Dismal Swamp of Virginia always held for him great interest and fascination. He devoted many years of his life exploring and collecting material. After his death there was found among his effects a note requesting that the manuscript be handed to his old friend and pal of many years, A. E. Baermann; he having faith that “Abe” would find a publisher for it. Stansbury realized that a book of this description would not appeal to the masses, and might not be a good business proposition for a publisher. His faith in his friend was well founded, as is proved by this published volume.

Stansbury was a scholar, much more of a scholar than the average American newspaper man. He knew the best of the literatures of half a dozen countries, and he always kept up with the latest literary movements; also he tried to keep me up with them, bringing me books that he considered promising or significant of new tendencies, almost as soon as they were published. And this, I began to understand after a while, was a lovely and touching thing for him to do; for he was frequently “broke” in his later x years, and these books must have cost him money that he needed badly for something else. But that was the kind of old dear “Stan” always was—he would spend his last cent for a book, and go without a meal to get it; and then he would give the book itself away to a friend who, he thought, might enjoy it. And if his friend did enjoy it, he would sit and glow and expand in the communion of thought and spirit thus established or confirmed.

I wish I had the material to write more about his life—I do not mean facts concerning this paper or that paper for which he worked, nor the names and dates of publications of his various volumes; I have all that. I mean, I should like to know in detail just how he lived and got along the last five years of his existence. I should have the material for a real

memoir, instead of a hasty note like this—indeed, the material for a novel; for I suspect that in these last five years he used to have some pretty hard times.

He would drift in to see me after an absence of a week or two with some book he thought I should read, with all the quiet cheerfulness of a person who has not a worry in the world, and no task except to expel the worries of others—and maybe the book itself would represent what should have been yesterday's dinner. But no one could ever be so impertinent as to inquire too curiously just how “Stan” was getting along; combined with his gentleness and humor was a native dignity, a very real dignity, which forbade curiosity. He preferred to put, and keep xi his associations on an intellectual plane; he would not associate with any one with whom he could not associate on that basis.

“Stan” met victoriously, in his last years, one of the most difficult tests to Which a human being can be put—although he might be broke financially, it was always he who conferred something upon his friends; it was he who gave them something valuable and unusual; it was he who condescended; it was he who was the donor always; and the thing that he gave, so quietly and continuously, was himself, his rare and unusual self. He was, to the end, the gentleman and the aristocrat, conferring benefits upon others, and through whatever overlay of circumstances, the fact that he was a gentleman and an aristocrat shone through triumphantly.

Don Marquis.

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THOMAS MOORE AND THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP

“My boat is on the shore, My bark is on the sea, But before I go, Tom Moore, Here's a double health to thee!”

—BYRON

Although the famous “Colonel William Evelyn Byrd of Westover, Virginia, Esqre.,” wrote in 1725 the first coherent and intelligible account of the region, no essay on the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia would be complete without a direct allusion to the fact that it was Thomas Moore, the poet, who first made it famous wherever the English language is read or spoken. The ballad of “The Lake of the Dismal Swamp” was written by Moore after a visit to the Swamp in 1803. It was written in a tavern on Main Street in Norfolk on the night that the poet returned from the Swamp. The building in which the famous poem was written is still standing, having seen many changes since the days when it housed its distinguished guest. Well known and much quoted as the ballad is, it has never become trite or hackneyed, except in the immediate vicinage of the Swamp itself where it has, perhaps, through constant reiteration 4 somewhat outworn its welcome. It is therefore with no especial sense of trepidation that it is here reproduced:

A Ballad

The Lake of the Dismal Swamp

Written at Norfolk, in Virginia

“They tell of a young man who lost his mind upon the death of the girl he loved, and who suddenly disappeared from his friends and was never afterwards heard of. As he had

frequently said in his ravings that the girl he loved was not dead but gone to the Dismal Swamp, it is supposed that he had wandered into that dreary wilderness and either starved to death or been lost in some of its dreadful morases."— *Anon.*

" *La Pœsie à ses montres comme la nature."—D' Alembert.*

"They made her a grave too cold and damp For a soul so warm and true; And she's gone to the lake of the Dismal Swamp Where all night long, by a firefly lamp, She paddles her white canoe.

"And her firefly lamp I soon shall see, And her paddle I soon shall hear; Long and loving our life shall be, And I'll hide the maid in a cypress tree, When the footstep of death is near!"

Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds; His path was rugged and sore; Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds, Through many a fen, where the serpent feeds, And man never trod before.

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And when on the earth he sank to sleep, If slumber his eyelids knew, He lay where the deadly vine doth weep, Its venomous tear and nightly steep, The flesh with blistering dew!

And near him the she-wolf stirred the brake, And the copper snake breathed in his ear, Till he starting cried, from his dream awake, "Oh! when shall I see the dusky lake, And the white canoe of my dear?"

He saw the lake and a meteor bright Quick over its surface played— "Welcome!" he said; "my dear one's light"; And the dim shore echoed for many a night, The name of the death-cold maid.

Till he hollowed a boat of the birchen bark, Which carried him off from shore; Far he followed the meteor spark; The wind was high and the clouds were dark, And the boat returned no more.

But oft from the Indian hunter's camp, This lover and maid so true, Are seen at the hour of midnight damp, To cross the lake by a firefly lamp, And paddle their white canoe.

In 1803, Moore obtained an official situation at Bermuda, for which he received a substantial salary and the duties of which were discharged by a deputy. 6 From Bermuda he came to Norfolk, Virginia, where he spent some time prior to visiting other American cities and Canada. At Norfolk he was for a time the guest of Colonel Hamilton, the British Consul, where he made so deep an impression that Mrs. Hamilton shed tears at his departure. At Colonel Hamilton's house he met Mr. George Morgan, an attache of the consulate —. The “Morgante mio,” to whom he afterwards addressed a fine poem at Bermuda. Concerning this gentleman Moore quotes the Duke de la Rochefoucauld Liancourt, who says: “The excellent dispositions of the family with whom he resides, (Colonel Hamilton's) and the cordial repose he enjoys among some of the kindest hearts in the world, should be almost enough to atone to him for the worst caprices of fortune. The Consul himself, Colonel Hamilton, is one of the very few instances of a man, ardently loyal to his king and yet beloved by the Americans.”

Moore himself was imbued with the strongest prejudice against America and Americans and took the most gloomy view of the future of the country which he denounced in prose and verse. It is an evidence of the eccentricities of human reason that the poet who for many years received money from the British Government for which he performed no service whatever, should have been so severe a critic of the ethical delinquencies of others. Americans have never taken Moore's strictures seriously and have accepted his poetry at its true worth, without prejudice. They

Thomas Moore

7 agree with Plato who allows a poet to be “three removes from truth.” Much may be forgiven Moore because he had the good sense and taste to appreciate the charm of American women.

Moore wrote a goodly quantity of verse while in Norfolk and perhaps the least ambitious of his efforts was the ballad of “The Lake of the Dismal Swamp.” Yet it has done more to keep his memory green in Virginia than all of his other verse, and the house where he sojourned a hundred years ago is to-day regarded by students as one of the most interesting of the literary landmarks of Norfolk.

Eighty-seven years after Moore's visit, another Irish poet who was likewise a traveler, a patriot and withal a very lovable man—John Boyle O'Reilly—entered the Dismal Swamp in his canoe and became entranced with its mystic charm.

O'Reilly wrote as follows to a friend, the letter being published in the *Boston Herald:*

“IN THE DISMAL SWAMP

“Wednesday Morning, May 16, 1888.

“I write this from near the heart of the Dismal Swamp and send it by an obliging canal man to Norfolk.

“This place is wonderful and beautiful. It is a desolate land crying for attention and reclamation.

“The story of the Dismal Swamp is a tragedy of nature and a disgrace to civilization.

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“Mr. Mosely and I have had twenty-four hours of continued amazement and enjoyment.

“This is the most defamed land on the earth. The Dismal Swamp is the greatest sanitarium on the American continent.

“Last night we stopped at Mr. Wallace's, in the Dismal Swamp,—one of the largest and most beautiful farms in America. Last winter he killed on his farm thirty bears.”

O'Reilly likewise sent the following telegrams to some of his Boston friends:

“The most wonderful and beautiful sheet of water on the continent. This message is sent to Suffolk by canal chance-boatman.”

“The greatest fishing I have ever seen. Mr. Mosely shot a bald-headed eagle last night—a splendid bird.”

“Every hour unfolds new beauties and interesting sights.”

When Moore visited the lake of the Dismal Swamp, no doubt with the purpose of putting into ballad form the legend he had discovered in Norfolk, he naturally went alone in the “dugout” of a negro boatman, so that he might not be disturbed. He passed up the canal, came through the “feeder” and entered the lake, just as we did, beneath the living arch of cypress. “He wrote all the time he was in 9 my boat,” says the man who brought him to the lake. This negro boatman, called “Uncle Tony,” was a well-known character. From his own lips the story of the poet's visit has been written down by Mr. Robert Arnold of Suffolk, Virginia. Here is Uncle Tony's story:—

“I shall never forgit dat time. One mornin' I war gittin' my skiff reddy to go to de lake, a mighty nice-lookin' man cure up to me an' sed: ‘Ar you de man dat will carry me to de lake ob de Dismal Swamp for which I will pay you one poun'?’ De gentman talked so putty dat I tole him to git in my skiff an' I would carry him to de lake. I notice dat he kep' writin' all de way. When I got to de horse camps (a large encampment of negro woodcutters), I stopped to git somefin' to eat. He come outen de skiff an ax me what I stop for. I tole him I stop to

eat some meat an' bread. He ax me if I would have a drink. I tuk off my hat an' tole him dat I would be much obleeged to him for it. He fotched a silver jug, wid a silber cup for a stopper, an' sed: ‘My man, dis is Irish whiskey, brung it all de way from home.’ He tole me dat his name was Thomas Moore, an' dat he come fore ‘way ober yonder, an’ was gwine to de lake to write ‘bout a spirit dat is seed dar paddlin’ a kunnue. De bar ‘gin tu rise on my hed, an’ I ax him ef dat wus a fac! He said dat he wus tole so in Norfolk. I shall nebber forgit dat gentman. I fotch him back, an' he gin me de poun' which war five dollars, an' he lef' for Norfolk, bein' mighty glad dat 10 I had carried him to de lake. He role me dat he had trabbled an' seen sites, but dat he nebber was so ‘stonish befo’; he did not ‘spec’ to see at de end of de kunel sich a putty place, an' dat I would hear some time what he wus gwine tu say 'bout it.”

Thus, as the later Irish poet puts it, is the lapse of time forgotten and association renewed. There is no age in art. The song of the true poet is as unrelated as the song of a bird or a brook. No one can see the Dismal Swamp and not think of Thomas Moore, for the poet has stamped the region forever with the impress of his deathless art.

IN SPRING

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IN SPRING

“You are going to the Dismal Swamp?”

“Yes.”

“Will you be there at night?”

“I think so.”

“I wish you wouldn't. We had a cousin, a young man, who went there at night, He contracted some mysterious disease which developed immediately, accompanied by strange discoloration of the skin. Within a week he was dead.”

This was serious and somewhat complicated matters. A nice question of ethics took possession of my mind. Should I, or should I not, repeat the gruesome tale to my colloquial friend the sailor who had promised to accompany me to the swamp? I feared to lose him, but conscience conquered a criminal tendency to silence, so I told him, frankly, what my Norfolk friend had said.

“Charles,” he remarked between tugs at a recalcitrant corncob, “there are but two propositions in this world that I fear—an angry woman and a snake. That bunch has got me beaten to a frazzle. The swamp for ours!”

I temporized with my conscience to the extent of failing to tell him that the Dismal SwAmp was, as 14 he would have expressed it, somewhat long on snakes. At least, so I was informed. It being mid-May, the serpents might still be in retirement. So I held my peace.

The Dismal Swamp captured my imagination in early childhood. Having saturated my young soul with Moore's ballad, the very name of the region fascinated me largely on account of its horrible beauty. Within its mysterious depths, in thought,

“Through an alley titanic, of Cypress, I roamed with my soul.”

I have since thought that Poe should have written the epic of the swamp and that Moore's ballad is immortal largely because of its alluring title. It is certainly unworthy of his genius notwithstanding the fact that it has made the Dismal Swamp famous wherever the poetry of love and life is read. When in later years I found myself in “Old Norfolk Towne,” the mystic impression of my childhood became an obsession. As I lay awake listening to the

ceaseless noises of the night, the Dismal Swamp called me as long ago it had called the unhappy young lover—so I went to it.

As an antidote to my somewhat morbid temperament, I asked my friend the man of the sea to go with me. Apart from his fear of snakes, there was no nonsense about him. In case we had to spend one or more nights in the swamp, I would fall back on 15 his common sense as a shield against its ghosts and familiar spirits. Besides, he was a good sailor, and eke an engineer, I could rely on him in canoe, row boat or launch.

It is a strange anomaly that anything dismal should be regarded as an asset. Least of all when the dismal thing is the most dismal of all dismal things—a swamp. An asset, however, the great Dismal Swamp of Virginia undoubtedly is; an asset to the state on account of its beneficent influence on the climate and also because of the material things of value that it yields. There is at this writing, a bill before Congress whose purpose is the complete draining of the swamp with a view to transforming it into farm lands. This I believe to be a great error which might afterwards be fraught with serious consequences —namely the substitution of drought and disastrous fires in a wide region now blessed by rain and the beneficent dampness of the swamp. The great arid interior of the continent of Australia would to-day, have its value increased a million fold could this and other great swamps be transplanted there to cause the desert to blossom as the rose.

The idea of draining the swamp and utilizing its rich soil for agricultural purposes, is the first thing that comes into the head of an enterprising man who becomes interested in the subject. But there are two sides to every question. We know that Tidewater Virginia within the sphere of influence of the Dismal Swamp is one of the best truck farming regions in the 16 world, with a plentiful supply of rain. With the swamp drained and turned into farm lands we know not what climatic changes would take place, but a lessening of rainfall would necessarily follow. When Professor Shaler, the Geologist, advocated the draining of the swamp in a report published some years ago, there was seemingly but one side to the question. Now, however, thoughtful and intelligent men who have studied

the subject, doubt the advisability of such draining, and regard the swamp as it is, as of great and lasting value to agriculture. Captain William F. Wise, a prominent trucker of Norfolk County, which is the greatest truck farming county in the United States, vigorously protests against the proposition to drain the Dismal Swamp. He sent to the Government at Washington a statement of the theory, long ago advanced by Commodore Barron and Captain Sam Watts, that the Dismal Swamp protects this rich agricultural territory of Southeastern Tidewater Virginia from droughts; and this theory Captain Wise supports by a remarkable daily record of the weather in this section. This record has been kept without intermission for seventy-four years, first by Captain Wise's father and then by himself.

The protest of Captain Wise is so lucid and appears to be so reasonable and interesting that I cannot refrain from quoting a portion of it. He says:

“The Swamp and the Lake have prevented injury 17 from drought in the truck fields of Norfolk until recently drained by the canal.

“Captain Sam Watts, one of Virginia's best informed public men, and Commodore Barron, after careful study, concluded that Lake Drummond had a decided effect upon local rainfall at Norfolk.

“Captain Watts stated that the influence of Lake Drummond over local rainfall in the territory about five miles east and west across the lake, and extending north in a ‘comet’ shape to Hampton Roads, showed that there was never a serious loss of crops from drought. No other locality in the Union, so far as known, has such a record. The reason stated by Captain Watts for his contention that Lake Drummond was the cause of this benefaction was; the close proximity of the Gulf Stream—combined with the different temperatures of the Gulf Stream, the ocean water, the land, and Lake Drummond—aided by the prevailing wind when normal.

When the water in Lake Drummond a few years ago was lowered by improvements in the canal, the effect was looked for. It resulted in the first loss of a cucumber crop since

the Civil War. The writer's information is taken from his diary, carefully kept since the Civil War.

“If Captain Watts and Commodore Barron were right in their theory, what can we expect when the Lake is drained?

“The draining of Lake Drummond would probably injuriously affect the water supply of Norfolk City. 18 If the rainfall of Norfolk is lessened, the water supply of Norfolk City, entirely dependent upon rainfall, may be seriously hurt.

“To drain the Dismal Swamp would subject most valuable property to destruction by fire.

“Let the government drain the whole swamp, and before it could be gotten beyond what is considered the hazardous danger line (a few years' cultivation) one fire would make the entire property a barren waste.

“The swamp produced with the greatest rapidity a maximum amount of lumber, and is itself a magnificent forest reserve. It is well known that when juniper (white cedar) is cut, it readily springs up in a new growth.

“The swamp now supplies hundreds of telegraph poles and trolley poles of this juniper. This forest reserve was recognized by George Washington, and large acreage there was acquired by him for timber, not for agriculture. Nowhere in the Union, we are advised, does a tree grow faster than in Eastern Virginia, and we know of no place in any of the States touching the Atlantic Ocean that offers such an opportunity for perpetual supply of the best timber.

“It would seem to me the height of folly for the government to spend millions in irrigation and to preserve forests, while at the same time it is destroying a natural supply of water for an immense territory, and a natural and perpetual supply of lumber. We are happy, we want to stay so.”

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The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Immigration thinks that the swamp may properly be accounted a natural wonder. It is an extensive region lying mostly in Virginia, but partly in North Carolina, and covered with dense forests of cypress, juniper, cedar and gum. It is a remote, weird region formerly inhabited by many wild animals. Its silence is broken by resounding echoes of the woodman's ax in hewing its trees that are of great value, for the manufacture of buckets, tubs, and other varieties of wooden-ware, for shingles, staves, and ship-timber. In the middle of the swamp is Lake Drummond (lying entirely on the Virginia side), a round body of water, being the largest lake in the state. It is noted for the purity of its amber colored water, the hue being derived from the roots of cypress and juniper. This water will remain for years without becoming stale or stagnant and is used by ships and vessels going on long sea voyages.

The Dismal Swamp before the war was often the retreat chosen by run-a-way slaves for the purpose of hiding where none sought to follow. In its deep recesses were secret hiding places to seek to find which would have been certain death to the uninitiated. These spots were hidden in the deepest and most nearly impenetrable portions of the swamp, surrounded by treacherous quagmires and heavy undergrowth of swamp plants. The tortuous paths were well concealed by rank growth of cane and thick foliage where the fugitive was beset by gnarled and 20 tangled vine, and root, and while he may have failed to encounter the she-wolf as she stirred the brake, “The copper snake breathed in his ear.”

Many are the tales of slaves who, fleeing from the penalty of their crimes or for some other cause, sought to hide themselves in the swamp, thus escaping one form of punishment for another far more horrible. Some of these men were said to have been hidden in the dread morass for more than twenty years. The negroes who were engaged in cutting shingles from the cypress trees were friends of the outcasts. The run-a-ways helped the shingle cutters in their labor, and the latter reciprocated with provisions and stores of powder and

ball. The masters knew their slaves were in the swamps and there, in most cases, they were content to let them stay.

The limits of the Dismal Swamp are not well defined as the line of demarcation of its edges varies with the rainfall and the presence of the swamp flora. It varies in altitude from twelve to twenty-two feet above mean tide level and floats gradually upward, its highest portion lying in the southwest. Lake Drummond which lies near the center of the swamp while not a perfect circle in shape, varies but slightly from it, and is about three to six miles in diameter according to your authority. The depth of the lake which prior to the deepening of the Canal feeder was fifteen feet, now averages a little more than six feet. Its floor is covered with sand which 21 would be white but for the brown water highly tinctured with vegetation. This water has for more than a century borne the reputation of being medicinal, and is said to be perfectly wholesome. It has no especial taste and no odor. It is noted for its keeping properties and the lake has been used for generations for supplying ships with water for long voyages. The lake is surrounded by a dense forest and its edges are marked by the stumps of cypress trees while a number of these trees are still growing in the water near its shores. There are extensive cane brakes throughout the swamp whose principal flora consists of bald cypress, juniper and black gum. The soil for a depth of about twenty feet consists of vegetable accumulations. Examination has shown it to be composed of about ten feet of peat filled with roots and tree trunks overlying about eight feet of clear peat which merged with the overlying beds and this in turn was underlain by fossiliferous sand. Science explains this by saying that at first when vegetation was young, relatively fine-grained peat accumulated, but as the forest grew older, roots and trunks were intermixed with the finer materials, and finally the depression was filled up to the general level of the country by these accumulations. Lake Drummond is said to be the remaining portion of an original center pond, greatly encroached upon by the forest and cane brakes. The soil of the Dismal Swamp is largely a black gum deposit which bears a forest of cypress, black gum and red maple. This soil contains a large 22 amount of organic matter and much of it when drained proves to be rich and lasting, agriculturally.

Library of Congress

The greater part of the Dismal Swamp lies in what is known geographically as the Norfolk quadrangle. A part of it is in Suffolk County and its southern portion overlaps with North Carolina.

Geologically speaking, the principal determining cause which leads to the formation of the Dismal Swamp, is found in the character of the surface on which the marsh accumulation rests. Professor U. S. Shaler, who made a scientific study of the swamps of the United States says that the whole of this coast from New York southward has the form of an ancient sea-bottom, more or less modified by river action, the measure of the modification being determined by the average height to which the sea level has been elevated above the level of the ocean and the steepness of the slope toward the sea. In Virginia, the field in which the Dismal Swamp lies is a billowy plain which is sharply bounded by escarpment formed by the sea when the surface of the continent was about thirty feet below its present level. This ancient sea beach extends from near Suffolk, Virginia, southward with a perfect line of demarcation to Albemarle Sound. The eastern boundary of the swamp district is determined by low dune-like elevations which only attain the height of a few feet and serve in a measure to retain the swamp water upon the surfaces of which they lie. They are unimportant compared with the effect produced by vegetation in this district. The

Cypress Trees, Lake Drummond

23 swamp deposits indicate in a general manner that the beds are of the pliocene age. The nature of the strata underlying the swamp points to the fact that they were accumulated in shallow but quiet water. The bench on which the Dismal Swamp lies was formed during a period of elevation when the sea lay at about thirty feet above the present level. The original area of inundated lands in this district was perhaps one third greater than at present. The lands won from the margin of the morass and from swamps more or less connected with its main area probably amount to seven hundred square miles. The area of swamp lands remaining in Virginia probably amounts to fifteen hundred square

miles. Morasses somewhat similar are scattered over about one half the territory of the United States and cover one hundred thousand square miles.

Southern swamp-making plants belong in the main to the genus arundo (our common cane), to species of grape, to the bald cypress and juniper among the conifers. In the Dismal Swamp the cane does not obtain its full measure of development. It is rare that the stems ever exceed an altitude of fifteen feet or a diameter exceeding half an inch. The growth obtained is erratic and its limitations well defined. It rarely covers large spaces but is found here and there in spots. The peat of our American bogs is little used for fuel. Black Island is an exception to this rule for there its use has been long continued. In England and Canada much skill and money have 24 been spent to convert peat into a more serviceable form, but so far it has poved a failure. The peat formed by forest leaves washed down by streams makes a valuable fertilizer.

Large swamps like the Dismal Swamp whose area is measured by square miles usually possess a fauna peculiar to themselves. The characteristics exhibited by the animals which occupy such morasses are related to the nature of the vegetation and the degree of moisture of the earth. Nut bearing trees being rare, the arboreal rodents are generally absent although there are squirrels in the Dismal Swamp. The inundated nature of the soil makes it useful for occupation by the subterranean forms of that group. Serpents of a species which have accustomed themselves to dry situations are generally absent from the swamp. Such predacious animals as the fox and wolf find marshy land unsuited to their needs. Birds that rest upon the ground are rare. Swamp fishes present peculiarities not found elsewhere except in caves. In times past bears have been remarkably abundant in the Dismal Swamp. Formerly there were at least two hundred killed each year. Abundance of deer was also found in the swamp. A small variety of black, wild cattle, feralized from domestic herds, used likewise to abound. They are said to have had frequent combats with the bears, the fortunes of war varying at different times. It is a

notable fact that the wild cattle are obliged to do without salt, there being none in the Dismal Swamp.

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The canal, which dates back to the close of the eighteenth century, was justly regarded as a remarkable achievement and one of the most considerable hydraulic works undertaken in that century. The canal doubtless had an influence in partially draining the swamp whereby portions of its edges have been won from it for agricultural uses. The canal connected the waters of James River at Deep Creek, Virginia, with the waters of Albemarle Sound near South Mills, North Carolina.

The Dismal Swamp was once a favorite hunting ground of the Indians. Arrow heads, knives and hatchets have been frequently found there. Formerly it was thought that five navigable rivers and some creeks rise in it and that the sources of these streams were hidden in the swamp, no trace of them appearing above the ground. Hence the belief that there must be plentiful subterraneous fountains to supply these streams. Toward the south and east there is a large tract of country covered with reeds without any trees which, being constantly green and waving in the winds is called the Green Sea. This tract, however, is not an integral part of the Dismal Swamp. An evergreen shrub, called the gall bush, which bears a berry which dyes black like the gall of an oak, grows throughout the swamp.

A railroad, the name of which has been changed several times, passes for five miles across the northern part of the swamp. “Its path looks like a grand avenue, surrounded on either hand by magnificent 26 forests. The trees here, the cypress, juniper, oak, pine, etc., are of enormous size and richest foliage; and below is a thick, entangled undergrowth of reeds, woodbine, grape vines, mosses and creepers, shooting and twisted spirals around, interlaced and complicated so as almost to shut out the sun. The engineer who constructed the road through this extraordinary swamp found it so formidable a labor as almost to despair of success. In running the line, his feet were pierced by the sharp stumps of cut reeds; he was continually liable to sink ankle or knee deep in a soft muddy

ooze; the yellow flies and mosquitoes swarmed in myriads; and the swamp was inhabited by venomous serpents and beasts of prey."

The curious "knees" of the cypress develop only where the roots upon which they rest are beneath the surface of the water during the growing season of the year. In the case where the tree is altogether removed from the chance of inundation, the roots bear no knees whatever. The black gum secures a similar result with its roots by another contrivance—that is, the roots simply curve upward sufficiently to lift a portion of themselves above the water. In the case of both trees, it is nature's way of assuring to the roots the air which is necessary in order that they may live.

With reference to the healthfulness of the Dismal Swamp district, it is a common opinion that all swamp districts are necessarily afflicted with malarial disease. The fact appears to be that in hot countries where the level of the soil water varies at different seasons of 27 the year, malarious effluvium is bred. In regions where the soil, however wet, retains its moisture during the summer season at about the same height it holds during the winter, there seems to be no peculiar liability to malaria. In the Dismal Swamp in the central portion of the morass at a distance of a mile or more from the margin, there seems tolerable exemption from such diseases. This theory must of course be modified in view of the now general acceptance of the other theory that the sole disseminator of malaria is the mosquito.

Much inquiry in and about Norfolk failed to elicit any clearly defined method for seeing the Dismal Swamp. Occasional excursions are made to Lake Drummond by way of the Dismal Swamp Canal and its feeder. Those making the trip this way usually go in a launch holding fifteen or twenty persons and after a sail around the lake return to Norfolk the same day.

While this method of visiting it, gives one a glimpse of the edge of the great morass, it is little more than a glimpse and not sufficient for one who is drawn to the swamp by a sense of fascination and longing. Besides, a gay party of men and women distracts the

attention from natural objects. The best way to observe nature is to observe it alone. At such times those things that appear trivial and uninteresting when seen in company with others, become subjects of careful observation which lead to serious thought. Therefore I determined that my first visit should not 28 be made in the conventional manner. The map informed me that the Jericho Canal emerged from the swamp in the neighborhood of Suffolk; that the Jericho Canal was about ten miles long and that it led through the heart of the damp forest to Lake Drummond. I concluded that the Jericho Canal would be a good medium through which to study the famous swamp, so early one Sunday morning the Sailor and myself journeyed by rail to Suffolk, a distance of twenty-three miles from our base at Norfolk.

I have neglected to mention a possible obstacle to completing my plan. A newspaper dispatch from Suffolk late in April had stated that the Jericho Canal had gone dry and attributed the phenomenon to miniature volcanic eruptions in the swamp. It gave the names of citizens who attested the fact of the drying up of the canal. I assume that the story was false and was inspired during the mental excitement following the San Francisco horror, for at Lake Drummond late that afternoon, I met an old white man and a negro who had poled and paddled the entire length of the Jericho Canal that day.

At the hotel in Suffolk I inquired as to the best way to get into the swamp. The clerk informed me that I would have to drive to the Washington Ditch where I might be able to obtain a small boat in which to thread the canal or ditch to Lake Drummond. He went on to tell of his own experiences in the morass. How he was beset by snakes innumerable which dropped into his boat from the trees and how bears 29 robbed his lonely hut by night. I would have stayed to listen to his literary lore—how some “feller” had written a “piece” of poetry about a drowned girl in a white canoe, but the snake stories had visibly affected my friend the Sailor, so we fled from the loquacious if not veracious narrator. In the street we found a negro who guided us to one Jim, a black Jehu, who agreed to drive us out to Washington Ditch.

Behind Jim's two willing but overdriven roadsters, we covered the seven miles that lie between Suffolk and the spot where Washington Ditch enters the Dismal Swamp. A synopsis of the things seeable enroute would indicate a comparatively deserted road through pleasant but nondescript truck farming country. We passed picturesque Negro cabins, luxurious fields of dark red clover, cabbages, oats and timothy. Plebeian razor backed hogs grunted, and the blackberry blossoms smiled at us as we sped by. The road narrowed toward the end and we drove through water several inches deep at the edge of the swamp crossing an aqueous “thank-you-ma'am” that came up to the hubs of the wheels. We crossed several “corduroy” bridges that would be death to a stranger to negotiate in the dark and drew up before an old fashioned farmhouse, surrounded by shade trees which suggested the idea that it would rather be picturesque than comfortable.

Here we were well received. A wholesome and comely young matron, the daughter-in-law of the 30 farmer, informed us that she, her husband and pretty babies had spent the night in a hut at Lake Drummond in the swamp. This was consoling as she and her children looked healthful and happy. We arranged with the farmer for a flat bottomed boat, and commandeered a smiling negro who said he could paddle and pole but did not know the ditch. Thus recruited, we started for a half mile walk through alder fringed lanes, past fragrant racks of split pine, and unfragrant hog pens, for the landing from which we were to embark. There we found moored a little brown batteau which we got into, and paddling vigorously, entered at once the Dismal Swamp.

Washington Ditch is a narrow canal of varying width and depth. It is probably eight or ten feet wide at its most narrow places. It is named after General Washington who is said to have surveyed the swamp, owned part of it and predicted that some day it would be transformed into productive farms. He was likewise the organizer of the company that built the first canal.

Ditch is an ugly word to use in connection with this beautiful waterway, but it is official and therefore unanswerable. If Lake Drummond were a pure circle, the Washington

Ditch would represent a straight line leaving its northern edge at a tangent, and running northwest through the swamp for five miles. The Jericho Canal which is similar in character, leaves the lake at the same point, but takes a more northerly direction. After a few miles it dips 31 to the westward. It is about ten miles long and emerges from the swamp near Suffolk. Both of these canals have been greatly neglected as waterways and the voyager meets with such obstructions as fallen trees and dense foliage. This adds to the difficulties of navigation but much increases the picturesqueness of the scene.

The first impression conveyed to the mind on entering the swamp in the way here indicated is that of supreme beauty. The title of the region is a misnomer, for here is a veritable fairyland—a perfect setting, if there were dryer spots for repose, for a Midsummer Night's Dream. The forest is wildly luxuriant and the richly leaved branches of the noble trees meet and interlace above the stream. The undergrowth is profuse, but does not here form a jungle. Trumpet flowers and bramble blossoms line the canal and add to its natural charm. The water when examined, appears light brown. The swamp has no odor save that caused by the luxuriant vegetation at which the senses ache. Long ropelike vines of tropical appearance reach to the lofty branches or lie knotted and gnarled in rich and picturesque tangle. Far ahead as the eye can travel lies the bright stream, flashing back so much of the sunlight as filters through the leaves. Huge logs, rich in color and the changeful verdure of decay lie in careless confusion and profusion on the banks or in the stream, covered with fairy moss, forming miniature forests. The note of a solitary wood thrush rings full and true 32 through the majestic aisles. All else is silence.

We paddled along without a word entranced by the rare beauty of the place. Dismal the swamp may be at times, but it is certainly glorious on a bright morning in May. The trees are worth coming far to see. Giant gums, junipers, cypress, wild elms and red maple mingle their variegated foliage which shows every shade of green from almost yellow to deepest olive, while their roots reach far into the moist earth Those of the cypress not content with nurturing the strong and dignified trees, revel in the luxuriance of life at their

base forming innumerable efforts at further production, and the craving for air in the shape of the curious cypress “knees.”

Presently we come out of our day dream with a start. Our black boy, Walter, announces the presence of a snake on a moss covered log which we are passing and the “Sailor” becomes deadly pale. The little creature which we had awakened from his siests, glides silently into the mysterious regions of the morass. Further down stream Walter kills one with his paddle, whereupon that stalwart sailor man falls into my arms a fluttering mass of human terror, thereby nearly upsetting the frail batteau. Further down stream we discovered yet another serpent,—a dead one—on a log which closed our account with reptiles for the day, if I except a tiny chameleon whom I met later sunning himself on the shore of Lake Drummond.

For two hours we paddled and poled through 33 George Washington's miniature canal. As we drank in the fantastic and fascinating beauty of the forest, Walter regaled us with the yarns which the gentle stranger must ever suffer for his sins. Eliminating Darwin and Tyndall I never take my science from scientists, but go direct to the unlettered Walters of the world. The tales of this negro made the Dismal Swamp doubly precious to my mind. Snakes formed much of the burden of his song. But there were other things, indeed, besides snakes. The waters of his mind, if not of the swamp, teemed with most interesting fish. White shad, hickory shad, raccoon perch, red fin perch and chub, peopled his fancy, if perch can be called people. Game? Lots of it! There were grizzly, gray and black bears, wild cats, wild hogs and cattle, coons, possums, rabbits and squirrels galore. There was quail in abundance and as for wild turkey, well! one day Walter was threading the swamp when that bird dog o' his'n said something. He warn't paying much attention, but he looked up an' there set nine wild turkeys all in a row! Truly Dismal Swamp is the place for sportsmen. Walter also had something to say on the subject of mosquitoes. He remarked that in the summer months they would remove your hat from your head; that they killed hogs, one farmer having lost nine from this cause last season. Bad as they are, they are quite innocuous when compared with the yellow flies who take possession of the

swamp late in summer and close it against all other visitors. So 34 graphic was the negro's description of the plague of yellow flies that we concluded that it would be well to approach the swamp in the dog days with caution, if at all. There are larger things than yellow flies, but few more potent.

As we proceeded, the trees appeared to get larger and grow farther apart so that more light was admitted into the forest. At the end of the two hours mentioned above, we came to a full stop at the Jericho Locks about a hundred yards from the shore of Lake Drummond. The Locks, so-called, is a primitive dam over and around which the waters of the Washington and Jericho canals, which here converge, pour into the lake, the fall being about two feet, the stream forming rapids for the short distance. Here stood the crazy and neglected cabin in which our friends of the farm had passed the previous night —a picturesque ruin. Even so, it was the only sign of human handicraft in that wild place. Here we dragged the batteau over a short carry and entering the rapids were shot almost instantly on to the broad surface of Lake Drummond. The wind had freshened and kicked up an awkward sea in the shallow waters making navigation difficult in such a craft as ours. Nevertheless we paddled well out into the lake and rested awhile to view the scene.

Lake Drummond is said to have been named after its discoverer who, says the same tradition, wandering in pursuit of game with two companions, was lost. and in his rambling came upon this lake. His comrades 35 failed to find their way out of the morass, but Drummond escaped therefrom and gave an account of the sheet of water which has since been called after him. It was in 1804 that the poet Moore made a tradition of the lake the subject of his famous ballad.

The theory has been advanced that the basin in which Lake Drummond lies was formed by fires which occurred in some remote period. In proof of this hypothesis it is pointed out that during dry seasons, patches of the swamp a few acres in extent have been seen to burn to such a depth as to form a place for the accumulation of permanent water. This theory of the formation of the lake, is rejected by Professor Shaler. The lake

must therefore be considered as belonging to the type of peat enclosed lakes which are common in the small morasses of the glacial area.

The keynote of Lake Drummond is desolation. Despite the beauty of its densely wooded shores where wild elm, cypress, juniper, and gum struggle for supremacy, the general effect of the lake is depressing. As we looked on it, no sail broke the monotony of its dark waters of the somber hue of burnt umber. No sign of life disturbed its solitude, if we except an isolated eagle sailing high in majestically graceful circles near its edge. The roughness of the water, out of all proportions to the breeze, added to the sense of strangeness that here affects the beholder. It may be that tradition playing curious tricks with the imagination, influences the mind adversely regarding 36 this strange lake and that sub-consciously one feels that which he does not see. As I sat in the little boat and looked out upon the broad expanse of turbulent water, the feeling came over me that we had— “Passed to the end of the vista,” and that at night this wraith-haunted lake of the Dismal Swamp “Where all night long by a firefly lamp She paddles her white canoe” must be positively uncanny. In the mind's eye the characteristics of the wild region become distorted until it represents the apotheosis of desolation. This suggestion becomes accentuated as the eye wanders to the shoreward shallows where, standing grim and gaunt, are seen the naked and time-mangled corpses of giant cypresses long since dead. As a rising bank of dark cloud throws the lake into deep shadow, mystic words come to me like the burden of a song:

“It was hard by the dim lake of Auber, In the misty mid region of Wier— It was down by the dank tarn of Auber In the ghoul haunted woodland of Wier.”

At the ruined cabin I met the old man who had come down to the lake to fish by way of the Jericho Canal. The roughness of the water spoiled his sport for the day, but he and his companion, a white haired

Characteristic Trees

37 negro, were preparing to camp in the hut for the night hoping for better luck next morning. He told me that the lake was full of chub. He knew of a gentleman, he said, who came to the lake every year and spent a week or more there drinking its waters as an antidote to malaria. It made him immune, he said. The negroes and woodmen, he told me, who live in the Dismal Swamp and drink its waters continually, never have malaria. According to the old man the waters of the swamp and lake constitute a beneficent tincture of medicinal herbs.

After we had returned to the cabin, I wandered off into the swamp forest for a while, alone, as no amount. of persuasion would induce the Sailor to go with me. He remarked that he hadn't lost any snakes and did not propose to look for them. I might easily have lost myself in the strange tangle of the morass, but for the proximity of the lake and getting my bearings from the direction of the wind. My most active impression while alone in the depths of the swamp was the fear of sinking in the morass, together with a vague and indefinable sense of dread. It was a place in which the imagination plays strange tricks with its victim. Retracing my way to Jericho Locks, I found the practical minded Sailor indulging in a few emphatic remarks *sotto voce.* It would soon get dark, he said, and serpents,—whom he designated “a bunch of poisonous grafters”—are nocturnal in their habits. He admitted that poetry was all very well in its way and that, doubtless, as a swamp poet, Poe 38 had Tommy Moore skinned a mile. We had eaten nothing since daylight and could not continue to live on tobacco, or perpetually stave off the pangs of hunger by taking new reefs in our belts. His peroration, so far as translatable—was to the effect that it was to be the nearest tall hotel for his.

The fact that the nearest hotel was twelve miles away by land and water did not, however, depress us as we started to return over our course of the morning. Fatigue and hunger lengthened the miles intolerably, but the unusual beauty of the place grew with the setting of the sun. The reflection of the trees in the water was mellowed by warm and tender tints, not possible in the garish light of midday. Shadows became deeper and longer and the forest took on fantastic shapes. I caught the bright whistle of a red bird and replying

occasionally in kind, the unseen songster accompanied us for miles cheering us on our way. As we neared the edge of the forest, the crimson and gold on the water's surface deepened into violet and purple, then melted into somber gray. The wind died out, the red bird ceased his song and nothing stood between the outer world and the depths of the dark forest but silence—a silence so dense that the dip of the paddles in the stream carried far, and the ticking of a watch became painfully audible. Even the garrulous Sailor was for the time eloquent with silence. The forest now no longer possessed definite shape or form. The vaguely outlined trees surrounded us as an army of weird, gray 39 shadows, fading into a vast and frightful phantasmagoria that the imagination did not dare to follow. Innumerable fireflies like souls released from cypress trees began to appear, their fitful gleam of tremulous light making a beautiful mockery of illumination. It was well that we were emerging from the forest of the Dismal Swamp for night had fallen.

IN SUMMER

43

IN SUMMER

My second visit to the Dismal Swamp was made in mid-August, the date being the 12th to be exact.

My companions were two young newspaper men, Silas E. Snyder and John Allen, alert, resourceful, cheerful, and ready for any emergency. The day opened steaming hot with a dull haze lurking on the horizon which gradually evolved as the sun rose higher into threatening thunder caps which appeared for a time to be as yet afar off. The weather bureau predicted a fair day, an audacious prophecy in view of the fact that it had rained in Tidewater, Virginia, every day for about fifty days. As we left Norfolk on the 7:40 train on the Norfolk and Western road bound for the Jericho Water Tank, a mile or so northeast of Suffolk, the heat and humidity bade fair to break the record for discomfort even in the dog

days. It was our intention to get into the Swamp by way of the Jericho Canal, the source or terminus of which is near the Water Tank mentioned.

It is customary to apologize for digression, but we might as well apologize for life itself, for life is a constant series of digressions. Although we had started for the Dismal Swamp and started early, we did not get into it as quickly as we had anticipated. In the 44 first place the conductor of the train declined to stop at the Water Tank on the ground that it was not regular. The retort courteous on our part to the effect that neither were his trains, did not have the effect of mollifying him, so he carried us on to Suffolk, much against our inclinations and desires, as we had been informed that the train would stop at the Tank on request. At Suffolk, we had a conference, the outcome of which was that we concluded to walk back to the Jericho Tank and carry out our original program. Distances are very deceptive on railway tracks and by the time we reached our destination, we concluded that the road must have been laid out on a scale of nautical miles, for we were suffused with perspiration and somewhat exhausted.

The condition that we encountered at the Jericho Tank did not meet our expectations. There we met four white tramps each armed with an empty tomato can which he used to dip water from the Jericho Canal to quench his raging thirst. They were waiting at the Tank, they said, in order to try and negotiate a ride on the first freight train going either way One asked for money to buy bread—and got it Two of them slunk away, while the fourth, a likely young Lancastershire lad who said he was a steamship fireman, fraternized with us in a friendly but unobtrusive manner. We gave him a drink of whiskey which he needed badly. We gave him some of our lunch which he gulped down like a famished wolf. Mosquitoes had played sad havoc with him, leaving 45 him scarcely the semblance of humanity. He carried a small vial of antidote to rub on the bitten parts of his anatomy—and there were few unbitten parts—and that was his sole personal property. He confided to me that he had eaten nothing since Wednesday—four days—and when I saw him eat, I believed him. He was thousands of miles from his home, without money and apparently without prospects. Yet he made no complaint—there was not a whine in him. He was

altogether a likely young fellow and probably of the stuff of which some of the first settlers of Jamestown were made. It was a pleasure for us to see to it that he got a ticket to Norfolk, a bed and breakfast with a prospect of a ship. We did not inquire into his morals, believing that “When we count the causes why men are cursed With a criminal taint, Let no man boast.”

Having eliminated the Caucasian, we turned our attention to the Negro race. Joe, a black farmer nearby who had a comfortable farm with apparently plenty to eat and drink, said he had no boat, no paddles, oars or poles. He, personally, was too tired to row, paddle or pole. This was not an abnormal condition, for Joe was born tired. He suggested that Mr. Ruffin, a negro farmer “a piece down the road” had a boat somewhere in the canal. Fortunately we encountered Mr. Ruffin on the road—his full name is Emmet Ruffin and he should be known to fame. He 46 is sixty-one years old and was a well-grown slave-lad when the Civil War began. The soldiers, he told us, pressed him into service on the road driving a wagon. They were kind to him, but made him work He had a boat on the Jericho Canal, and toiled painfully back to his farm to get the key to release it from its moorings. On his return he led us along the beautiful bank of the Canal, the surface of which was here covered with a rich profusion of water lilies in full bloom. We embarked in his frail punt after bailing her out, but soon discovered that she was making water at a rate that would require much more bailing if we remained in her. Ruffin poled the little craft along the canal with rare skill and at a pace that was remarkably rapid for a man of his years. He explained that he would not be able to take us the ten miles of the Jericho Canal to Lake Drummond on account of his physical condition. He suffered greatly he said, from pains in his “haid.” We concluded therefore, to see something of the Jericho Canal and then change our base—a decision which was hastened by the swarms of mosquitoes that were busy pumping blood out of us and filling the vacant spaces with most delectable poison. We saw no green or yellow flies and Ruffin informed us that they had “done gone” for the season.

I now had an opportunity of observing what I came to see—the Dismal Swamp in mid-August. The stream itself was somewhat sluggish at this point being literally choked with the plant life that grew

Jericho Ditch

47 within it. The bulk of this growth consisted of water lilies and they were extremely pleasant to the eye. I was amazed at the luxuriant richness of the foliage, which was, however, easily explainable as we had had nothing but rain for the greater part of two midsummer months. I had expected to find the trees somewhat scorched by the hot summer sun, but the swamp was more beautiful than ever. The noble trees and the thick undergrowth were as green and fresh as in early spring, the only difference lying in the fact that the stream was thick with vegetation and the foliage more mature than when I had observed it in early May. There was a marked absence of the song of birds in the encompassing forest and we saw no snakes whatever.

But we were not to escape the snake lore of the swamp, for Ruffin had us in his power and notwithstanding the pains in his “haid” fixed us with his eye as is the habit of ancient mariners. There were rattlers in the swamp in plenty, he said. That boy “o' his'n,” he remarked, had been “sont” to get some potatoes out of a hollow stump where they were kept. Before he could wink, a huge rattlesnake had embedded its fangs three times in his leg. The leg swelled enormously. Ruffin “corded it” and hastily made a tea of white ash leaves and brandy. Of this decoction he made the boy drink copiously. The swelling was reduced, the wounds dripped poison and the son and heir of the house of Ruffin was saved. No snake, said Ruffin, would go near white ash. If 48 you are bitten and can't get brandy, chew the leaves of the white ash and swallow the juice. It is a certain antidote.

The rattler, Ruffin opined, was a pretty bad animal, but not comparable in villainy with the “stinger.” The stinger does not bite, he stings. Ruffin is authority for the fact that it is his

habit to stick his head in the ground and thrash around ferociously with his tail which is an engine of death. Woe to anything that comes within the limit of its dreadful circle.

The old Negro next took up the question of agriculture—told us how he made more money per acre out of peanuts than cotton; told us many homely and pleasant things about his farm. He was a kindly and self-respecting man and when we had threaded our way back to the mooring place and parted from him, we all heartily wished that the pains in his honest gray “haid” would disappear as mysteriously as they had come.

Our incursion into the Jericho Canal with its supreme beauty, had but whetted our appetite to see more of the swamp. As the day was yet young, I suggested that we return to Suffolk and, if possible, drive out to the Washington Ditch where, if we felt inclined, we could paddle the five miles that lay between its outer terminus and Lake Drummond. The motion was carried and we started to retrace our steps along the railroad track to the town of Suffolk. The face of nature is very mobile in this part of the country and changes with lightning rapidity. By this 49 time the thunder caps that had remained vaguely in the distance in the early morning, seemed to draw near and encompass us. The face of the sun became obscured, then blotted out entirely. The cumulus clouds ran riot in a kaleidoscopic intermingling, the heavens opened and let down upon us all the glory and terror of a midsummer storm. The impossibility of describing even feebly a tempest of the elements drives us back to the simple recital of the fact that, drenched to the skin and mud bespattered, like three prairie schooners laboring under heavy weather we limped into the quaint little, town far more happy than presentable.

Nearly an hour was spent in the Negro quarter of the town before Jim the Jehu, who has already been introduced to the reader, was unearthed, after which it took fully half an hour before that slow moving darkey had his carriage ready for a start. Jim was sorely puzzled between his desire to earn the money and his reluctance to start on a seven mile drive with the strong probability of a drenching.

As we bowled along the pleasant country road, it was interesting to observe the wonderful progress of the growing crops since my last passage through the district in early May. The cotton, corn and peanuts had thriven and matured with prodigious luxuriance. Notwithstanding the abnormal rainfall these three Virginia staples looked wonderfully green and fresh and healthful. The noble fields of waving and murmuring corn were particularly soothing and attractive 50 to the eye. But little tobacco is grown in this section and that little in small patches strictly for home consumption. A suggestion of tropical Africa was conveyed to us in the groups of naked pickaninnies that grinned at us from crazy cabins as we sped by. It was difficult to realize that it was mid-August as we passed groves, orchards and fields all smiling with the green freshness of early spring.

As Jim had anticipated, we ran into squall after squall—a succession of violent electrical storms which suggested a return of the diluvian cataclysm. It seemed as though Heaven had taken the ocean into its keeping and was now pouring it upon our devoted heads. Jim's crazy carriage—the best for hire in Suffolk—afforded but slight protection and we were thoroughly drenched a dozen times. When we reached that part of the road that distinctly edges the Dismal Swamp, it was found to be so swollen by the flood that the water reached the body of the vehicle and wet the bellies of the horses. Nevertheless we enjoyed a childish pleasure in passing through it, as we did later in crossing the corduroy bridges, the like of which is not on land or sea. Amid lightning, thunder and deluge, we reached the pretty little farm that I had used as a base in May, and drove into the rough log barn to escape the fury of the elements. Here we found ourselves among a concourse of pigs, chickens and calves, of high and low degree. The chickens squawked and the mother hens, whose fluffy broods dotted the ground, made fierce dashes at us 51 with wings akimbo; the pigs grunted, the calves bleated, while the thunder of Heaven formed the orchestral accompaniment to this shrill barnyard cantata.

The farm was absolutely deserted so far as human kind was concerned. A half-grown hound appeared from beneath the house looking as though he thought it his duty to attack

us. Discretion having overruled this impulse, he gave vent to the shame of his cowardice by raising his muzzle toward the sky and emitting a dismal howl that sounded like the wail of a lost soul.

The storm increased in violence and fury, being rendered doubly beautiful by the presence of the sun which shone fitfully through rolling clouds and tumultuous rain, giving marvelous effects of changeful color to the landscape. Around us were well-grown fields of cotton, and corn and peanuts with patches of tobacco. Before us lay the tortuous and picturesque lane that led down into the forest of the Dismal Swamp which loomed up in the near distance like a cool mountain of verdure. The more mischievous of my companions, a lively young Celt from the Pacific Slope, sounded the great farm bell which calls the field hands home to meals, or at night notifies neighboring farms that trouble is at hand and help is needed. It brought no answering note however as its reverberations were absorbed by the glistening fields.

Suddenly there floated on the air the sound of 52 laughter and of song. Two comely mulattresses, innocent of the fact that they were observed, were seen dancing through the fields in the direction of the lane before referred to. They were of the age invented by Tennyson and were “Standing with reluctant feet Where the brook and river meet.” They were hatless, barelegged and so thoroughly drenched by the storm that their draperies revealed rather more than they suggested, unlike those of Greek statue. They leaped the fence lightly and danced down the lane singing bright melodies as they went. Between the bursts of song they laughed merrily at their own efforts. Their voices were singularly pure and sweet and as their full compass mingled with the soothing sound of falling rain, it was reflected against the great wall of the forest and thrown back into the storm. The writer has heard every great operatic artist of his day, but never in his life sweeter music than the joyous al fresco song and laughter of these young children of nature. As they danced gracefully into the distance they plunged through pools nearly waist high singing as they plashed the cool waters. As the forest absorbed them and the sweet voices died away in the distance, I mused regretfully on the fact that I was neither poet, painter nor sculptor,

for these merry and natural young half-castes 53 “Formed a group that's quite antique, Half naked, loving, natural and”— alas, by no means Greek, either in ethics, morals, or culture! They were, however, as fully children of the wild as was Pocahontas and her girl associates three centuries before their time.

Having concluded that it would not be wise to try to make Lake Drummond in such weather, the young Celt and myself reluctantly left our more delicate companion with Jim and the livestock and plunged into the swamp forest. Before doing so, we removed our shoes and socks and rolled our trousers above our knees, a needless proceeding in view of the fact that we were already thoroughly saturated with water. It may be that because we thus braved the swamp with bare legs and feet, that we next day discovered that we were attacked in spots with that “strange discoloration of the skin” of which the Norfolk lady's cousin had died. I may add that after a week had passed without our dissolution, we felt somewhat reassured.

We took the road or path along the Washington Canal, and followed it for a mile or two. The storm continued fitfully and my companion, to whom the scene was new, was entranced with the beauty of it. He saw nothing “dismal,” he said, in the glorious beauty of the forest and stream that came within our ken. We were obliged to wade through many pools and rushing streams where the canal had overflown 54 its banks or where new freshets had been formed. Unlike Jericho Canal the bosom of which we had found to be placid and flecked with water lilies, the Washington Canal had become a turbid torrent, the muddy current running free and strong. This part of the Dismal Swamp had greatly overflowed its normal perimiter and won back from cultivation some of its original domain. The life and activity of the flood added a new phase to the varied moods of the swamp and we were privileged to see it under conditions that do not exist except at very long intervals —conditions brought about by continuous and copious daily and nightly rainfall for nearly two months of the phenomenal summer of 1906.

We were so exhilarated by the strange fascination of the scene, that we lingered somewhat too long, gathering souvenirs in the form of baby cypress “knees,” ferns and the delicate foliage of the cypress trees. As we reluctantly turned to retrace our steps—an impossible process as most of them had been “writ in water”—the storm and forest had shut out the face of the sun and we blundered along in semi-twilight. We lost our way through neglecting to turn at the proper point of the path and plunged into new and wilder recesses of the swamp. Realizing our mistake, we reversed our course, and after some experimenting with misleading paths, touched with a vague fear that was more than half pleasurable, we finally struck the right trail and shortly after emerged from the forest into the friendly lane that led us back 55 to the little farmhouse where the carriage awaited us. Through the night and rain we journeyed back to Suffolk, wet, travel stained and weary, but content with the experience of even so meager an inspection of the Dismal Swamp.

On the ninth day of September following, I made a journey to the Dismal Swamp Canal, my point of destination being Deep Creek. The canal may be said to begin at Gilmerton which I reached by trolley from Portsmouth, the run taking thirty minutes. As the trolley terminates here, it was necessary to walk to Deep Creek about three miles further on. The road which I took lay along the bank of the canal the waters of which are of a dark reddish brown color. This season of 1906 having been unprecedented for continuous rainfall, the Dismal Swamp gave forth such a quantity of water as never was known before. So great was the volume of it that it washed away the lock in the feeder, leading to Lake Drummond, and poured for many weeks an enormous stream of dark water into the canal from whence it found its way into the Elizabeth River and Hampton Roads. So enormous was the volume that it colored the channel for many miles and was distinctly traceable to the waters of Chesapeake Bay.

The section of the canal between Gilmerton and Deep Creek, is very picturesque, the surrounding country is attractive and the walk notwithstanding the intense heat of the sun was a very pleasant one. At Deep Creek I obtained some doubtful refreshment at 56 a

cook shop kept by a Negro woman, which was the only place available for the purpose, apart from the private houses in the comfortable looking little village.

At this point is the great lock by means of which vessels are raised into the canal from the tidewater of the Elizabeth River, to be lowered again at the lock at the other end of the canal, at South Mills, North Carolina. The lock in the Feeder being broken will require months to be properly prepared so that vessels of any size can get into Lake Drummond, which for the time being is a *mare clausum* to any kind of commerce. The lock keeper at Deep Creek courteously explained to me the workings of the great lock and talked interestingly of the Dismal Swamp in which he had lived for a year at a time. He took me into his office and gave me a drink of juniper water which he had obtained in the swamp the previous day. He drank nothing else he told me and had never been troubled with malaria during his life in that region.

Nearby in an overflow pool a number of boys were swimming and diving in the dark water, enjoying themselves hugely. Further up the canal I had passed numbers of boys both black and white disporting themselves in the water and apparently having a fine time. There was at first something almost uncanny in the sight of them jumping into the dark water and plashing up the amber colored spray. If snakes abounded there, the boys betrayed no sense of 57 apprehension, but appeared to be carefree and perfectly at home. Then I came to reflect that many of these boys had never seen water of any other color, if we except the well water which they may have drunk at home. For hundreds of miles in this region, the water carries the tint given to it by the juniper and the cypress trees.

The lock keeper informed me that a small steamboat left Norfolk on Tuesday and Friday of each week, going through the canal to Elizabeth City, North Carolina. One of his duties is to collect the toll which on vessels under thirty tons is five dollars. the large vessels and lumber barges paying at the rate of so much per ton gross. Perhaps I cannot give the reader a better idea of the traffic of the Dismal Swamp Canal than to set forth a day's

business as clipped at random from a Norfolk paper. The *Virginian-Pilot* for April 21, 1906, contained the following report in its shipping column:

"SHIPPING REPORT, DISMAL SWAMP CANAL. (Hudson & Bro., Agts., Sanford Bldg.) Northbound: Tug John Taxis, Whitehurst, N. C., to Norfolk; schooner Ida G. Farron, Bloodgood, N. C., to Norfolk, lumber; schooner Wm. Young, Russell, N. C., to Norfolk; schooner R. T. Ellyson, Watkins, N. C., to Norfolk, oysters; tug Helen, Goodwin, N. C., to Philadelphia; barge W. B. Blades, N. C., to Philadelphia, lumber; barge E. E. Dale, N. C., to Philadelphia, lumber; barge J. W. Jannings, N. 58 C., to Philadelphia, lumber; tug Cyrene, Eure, N. C., to Norfolk; barge John Quinn, N. C., to Norfolk, juniper logs; barge Vanslyck, N. C., to Norfolk, juniper logs; tug W. W. Graham, Morrisette, N. C., to Norfolk; schooner Freddie Hamblin, Burriss, N. C., to Washington, D. C., shingles; schooner Maggie Davis, Truitt, N. C., to Norfolk, oysters; schooner Pearl Cullen, Buzzy, N. C., to Norfolk, oysters; schooner Edna A. Brown, Carpenter, N. C., to Norfolk, oysters; schooner M. J. Delan, Munford, N. C., to Norfolk, oysters; schooner Thos. E. Taylor, Sterling, N. C., to Norfolk, oysters.

"Southbound: Steamer Nina Overton, Norfolk to N. C., general cargo; tug Frank K. Eskerick, Dryden, Norfolk to N. C., barge Tioga, Norfolk to N. C., fertilizer; barge Agnes McNally, Philadelphia to N. C.; tug Cyrene, Eure, Norfolk to N. C.; barge Bear, Norfolk to N. C.; barges No. 1 and 2, Norfolk to N. C.; tug John Taxis, Whitehurst, Norfolk to N. C.; schooner Mary Gaylord, Midgett, Norfolk to N. C., general cargo; schooner James L. Milford, Jones, Norfolk to N. C.; schooner Jno. D. Robbins, Norfolk to N. C.; sloop Annie Hill, Norfolk to N. C.; schooner Daniel Bell, Ways, Norfolk to N. C.; schooner Topaz, Williams, Norfolk to N. C., steamer Thomas Newton, Cahoon, Norfolk to N. C., general cargo."

The volume of traffic varies of course, each day and in accordance with the time of year.

Having explored the banks of the canal for some distance, and observed the farming country that lies on either side of it, I returned to Gilmerton by a different route in order to see as much as possible of the country. The shades of night were falling as I reached Gilmerton where I boarded the trolley car and in three quarters of an hour was again back at my base at Norfolk.

On Friday, September 14, I again left Norfolk for the Dismal Swamp, this time in a small gasolene launch belonging to Captain N. B. Ransom of Norfolk. I was accompanied by a photographer, who took with him two valuable sets of apparatus, and the young engineer who ran the launch. Our destination was Lake Drummond and our object was the obtaining of some good pictures of the Dismal Swamp. It was noon when we left Norfolk and the weather was threatening, but we thought we might hope for clear weather on the following day.

As we sped down the South Branch of the Elizabeth River, keeping the red buoys on the starboard and the black ones on our port side, we had wind and tide in our favor. As we passed the Navy Yard we observed the dismantled *Olympia* famous as Dewey's flagship at Manila, the grim old *Texas* and a fleet of torpedo boats and destroyers. The water in the river, heavily tinctured with the juniper water of the swamp became deeper in color as we progressed until our wake began to resemble port wine in a violent state of agitation. Notwithstanding my 60 study of the chart, I overshot the entrance to Deep Creek about a mile and then, by the direction of some negro pile drivers, retraced my course until it was discovered. It was marked by a large sign on the shore on which in white letters on a black ground was the legend “Entrance, Dismal.” It was not a cheerful sign to contemplate and suggested Dante's Motto over the door of Hades.

Deep Creek is a tortuous tidewater estuary with pleasant looking banks of low pine and sedge. We arrived at the Deep Creek Lock at two o'clock and after we had secured a picture of it and the launch was raised twelve feet or so into the upper water, the whole process occupying about an hour, we proceeded on our journey through the canal. We

found this body of water not unlike other southern canals with the exception of the color of the water. Although we passed a few barges laden with juniper logs and a schooner or two laden with lumber, the general impression conveyed to the mind was one of loneliness. The banks of the canal were deeply lined with foliage and bright with wild flowers, but there was a marked absence of birds or animal life, if we except the graceful floating turkey buzzard or the straight flying crow. After traversing the canal for about an hour, nature recalled to us the fact that we were hungry, so we tied up at a favorable place on the west bank, built and lighted a fire and soon had some hot coffee to wash down the good things that were sizzling in the frying pan. The meal finished, we lighted our pipes 61 and prepared to continue our journey but as we shot out from the bank, a handsome and valuable Parker shot gun which was lying on the forward deck of the launch was jolted into the water and disappeared from view. This gun I had borrowed from a friend, and as it sank in the dark waters of the canal, my heart sank with it from sheer shame at the carelessness that had permitted it to remain on the unguarded deck. There was nothing for it but to tie up again and endeavor to recover the lost weapon, by no means an easy or certain task. The photographer and I were removing our clothes with a view to diving for the gun when the young engineer slipped out of his attire in a minute and plunged into the canal. He proved to be a veritable water dog, diving again and again in the ten or more feet of water in his efforts to locate the lost weapon. He complained that the acid water hurt his eyes, but would not heed our request for him to return to the boat and let us make a try for it. Finally he went down, feet first, and on returning to the surface sputtering informed us that he had touched the gun with his feet. After partially regaining his wind, he again went down, this time head first, and reappeared with the lost treasure in his hand. We hauled him on board, stopped his chattering teeth with a glass of grog and rewarded him in another way that seemed very satisfactory to him. The boy had been in the water upwards of an hour and emerged with a slight chill but otherwise smiling and happy. In two minutes, we 62 were under way again, and I soon had the precious shooting iron dry and oiled. We had delayed so long over our meal and the recovery of the gun that it was now within an hour or less of nightfall. We concluded, therefore, to reach the “Feeder,”

anchor in it and sleep in the open boat—not a cheerful outlook as the boat was small, but the remaining alternative was the bank of the canal with the lurking thought of snakes, which caused us to abandon that idea. All trepidation, however, proved to be unnecessary for good luck rewarded our philosophical optimism. While debating the question we were passing a pleasant looking homestead on the Eastern bank in front of which stood a gentleman in a cork helmet who hailed us pleasantly and berated us for being late to dinner. All this seemed to us like a scene in a pantomime or a fairy tale, for we did not recall an appointment to dine with any one in the heart of the Dismal Swamp. However, we tied up at the little landing, went ashore and were heartily welcomed by Captain John C. Wallace, whose hospitality is known far and wide in Virginia and elsewhere. He soon cleared up the mystery of our pleasant welcome by telling us that Captain Baxter, the Superintendent of the Canal had telephoned him from Deep Creek that we were on our way through the canal, so he calculated the time of our probable arrival and Mrs. Wallace had ordered an excellent dinner for our entertainment. Such overwhelming kindness, all unexpected as it was from perfect strangers, caused us 63 to swallow our Adam's Apples rather hurriedly several times as we tried to conceal our emotions.

Small need to dwell on the hospitality we here received. We dined, slept and breakfasted with this pleasant family which included, Mrs. Wallace and Dr. Wallace, an artist brother of the former. While spending the evening in that delightful home, it was difficult to realize that we were but a few miles from the isolated desolation of Lake Drummond. Here was refinement and up-to-date comfort and convenience including the telephone. Captain Wallace entertained us with a graphophone of the latest model and in his parlor were the latest books, papers and magazines. His gracious and kindly wife told me of their children now grown and gone out into the world—a proud and happy mother notwithstanding her delicate health. Just the kind of a brave optimist to assist her husband in subduing the wilderness and forcing it to blossom as the rose. She showed me autograph books and other tributes from such brilliant and charming travelers as the late John Boyle O'Reilly, who sixteen years before had been entertained at her house before he entered the Lake

of the Dismal Swamp in his canoe. Here is how the warmhearted Irish poet described his visit to the Wallace place in the month of May, 1888; whither he went, accompanied by Mr. Edward A. Moseley, now Secretary of the Interstate Commerce Commission:

“Soon after, through the gathering gloom, we saw the outline of a large house to the left of the canal, 64 with outbuildings and white fences, and other large buildings on the right side of the canal. This was Wallaceton, where, at Captain Wallace's house, we received a most hospitable welcome. In a few minutes the canoes were cared for, many willing hands helping, and we were enjoying an excellent supper. After supper it was hard to realize, from our refined surroundings, and the gracious hospitality we were enjoying, that we were within the bounds of, and not very far from the very heart of the Dismal Swamp. Three gentlemen connected with the National Geological Survey, were stopping at Captain Wallace's, and they told us much about the swamp region, which they were then surveying.

“That night we could only see the interior of this charming home; next morning we witnessed with astonishment the extraordinary wealth, fertility, beauty, and wonderful cultivation of Captain Wallace's magnificent farm. Every acre of this land, both east and west of the canal, has been saved within forty years from the Dismal Swamp. Forty years ago, the elder Mr. Wallace, a man of high intelligence and indomitable spirit, whose immense farm joins his son's, with his own hands cut down the first trees in the swamp, which marked the beginning of this estate. He and his son, Capt. John G. Wallace, have now, in the first order of cultivation, many thousand acres of land not inferior to the best on the continent.

“We were awakened in the morning by a chorus of bird song rivaling that of the evening before. On

Old Barn at Wallaceton

65 looking from our window we saw a field like a dream—1100 level acres without a fence —in which it appeared that not one inch was left neglected or unproductive. The splendid area of fertility was marked in squares of varying color like a map, here the rich dark brown of plowed loam; there the green ridges of early potatoes and corn; yonder a long stretch of clover, and so on until every foot of the fine field was filled with natural wealth.

“This field, called the Dover Farm, lies on the west side of the canal; that is, it reaches into the very depths of the swamp for nearly a mile and a half. Its position is between the lake and the canal. “How, then, if Lake Drummond and the canal be higher than the swamp, could this 1100 acres of land be drained? Captain Wallace ran a deep drain around this Dover Farm, bringing the end of it to the canal; there he stopped, and waited until the canal was emptied some years ago, for the purpose of being cleansed from stumps and sand. The indefatigable farmer took advantage of the dry watercourse and dug his culvert under the bed of the canal; bridging it securely. His drain was then several miles long, and he continued it until it emptied into the Northwest River, which runs out of the swamp.

“The energy and intelligence of these two gentlemen, father and son, working with such surroundings, are remarkable. The elder Mr. Wallace, a man considerably over seventy, spoke with almost enthusiastic earnestness of the work he had himself done, and the 66 greater work of general reclamation which is possible in the Dismal Swamp.”

I spent many hours listening to Captain Wallace as he graphically unfolded the lore of the Dismal Swamp and learned from him many interesting things concerning it. He it is who should have been the historian of the region and I sincerely hoped that he would find leisure to make the record in the evening of his life. But it was not to be.

After we had photographed the place and breakfasted, we embarked and in a short time had turned into the Feeder and were heading for Lake Drummond. The Feeder which is about eighteen feet wide is more picturesque than the canal proper, as the banks are far more irregular and the foliage more wild and rich. Although a storm was gathering, the

vista was extremely beautiful. We ran the four miles of the Feeder in a short time and came to a full stop at the foot of the Feeder lock which is all the more interesting and made a quainter picture from the fact that it had been going to decay for several years. It was now raining mildly, and, leaving the engineer in charge of the launch, the photographer and I made a “carry” of our necessary accoutrements to the top of the lock from which we observed the volume of water that flows from Lake Drummond through the waste way that skirts the lock. Here we found the lock keeper in the person of “Captain Jack,” a veteran of the region and a quaint and original character, 67 who is known far and wide. He lent us flat bottomed, square ended boat in which to row to the lake. We placed the photographic plant on board with little hope of being able to use it as the rain was now falling freely and the storm increasing. We rowed slowly through this end of the Feeder which is almost level with the lake which it drains and is different in character from the part below the lock, being more wild, mysterious, and picturesque. As I entered Lake Drummond for the first time from this direction, I felt a thrill of pleasure and curiosity mingled with disappointment, caused by the growing storm. A strong breeze was causing the dark red waters of the lake to form heavy waves which were breaking into “white caps” which really were brown or amber colored caps. The naked and desolate cypresses looked doubly forlorn and hopeless as they were silhouetted against the somber grayness of the storm. In the distance, the shores presented a forbidding and inky rim, vague and indefinable while the noise of the waters as they played in and around the hideous phantasmagoria of tortuous roots of dead giant cypresses, affected the nerves as a sound strange indeed and never heard before.

We had come far to picture this weird region and although there now appeared little hope of clearing weather, we determined to remain as long as possible on this strange lake, the occupancy of the surface of whose waters we alone shared with the storm. We rowed toward its center until its turbulent waves 68 pouring over our awkward prow half filled the boat with water, putting us in considerable danger, wetting our apparatus and covering us with brown spray. We sought the lee shore near the mouth of the Feeder

and bailed out some of the superfluous water. I call the place where we tied up the shore through courtesy, but it was in reality bog and marsh. We now started in to see what we could do in the way of a meal. The photographer had seen a beautiful green katydid clinging to the trunk of a cypress out in the lake and at my request had caught it for a purpose I had in view. Neither of us relished the idea of sacrificing the beautiful creature, but self preservation being a stronger instinct than sentiment, the insect was placed on an “old Virginia hook,” and the line cast overboard. The sinker had not touched the bottom before I began to haul into the boat a good sized catfish. The chain of destruction was now well under way and the catfish served as bait to catch his fellow-kind, so that we soon had enough for a mess. We now prepared a strange meal to be eaten under strange circumstances. In the blinding rain we made a fire, prepared some coffee which was cooled by the rain falling into it, heated a can of beans and fried our catfish in good olive oil. Standing ankle deep in bog, drenched to the skin, we enjoyed this unique meal, laughing heartily as we did so. The lake water was warm and the rain was warm. Our principal grief was caused by the fact that all hope of taking pictures that day was gone, and the following day 69 was the last we could spare for the purpose, as we were due in Norfolk early on Monday.

We remained on the Lake until the fast gathering darkness warned us that we must regain the lock, so we cast loose and allowed the current to take us gently down the Feeder to our starting point where we received a kindly welcome from “Captain Jack.” He housed our apparatus for the night and offered us the use of a shack, the roof of which, he said, did not leak. Small matter to us whether it leaked or not as it would have been impossible for mortals to be wetter than we. Calling the young fellow up from the launch, we lay down on the floor three in a row while rivulets of water ran from us forming pools in which our dank heads reposed. Throughout the night we made occasional attacks upon a bottle which was labeled “Red Globe,” and guaranteed to ward off chills. We all pretended to sleep but tired as we were, I do not think that forty winks were allotted among us and when the gray of

dawn shone through the still heavy downpour of rain, it was a great relief to get out into the storm which lost its terror with the coming of the day.

We breakfasted in the rain and again rowed to the lake in the fatuous hope that the weather might clear up long enough to allow us to get a picture or two, but it was not to be. Reluctantly we returned to the lock having to acknowledge ourselves beaten for the time. At the lock we had our final meal in the swamp, the basis of which was chicken, fried out in the rain— 70 and very good it was. The chickens were obtained from “Captain Jack,” who, when he learned that we would like to have them, procured an old muzzle-loading musket and drawing a bead on an innocent looking broiler, cut its head off with the bullet as clean as a whistle. Chicken No. 2 was served in the same way and Jack informed us that it was his custom to kill them after that manner.

Through the Feeder we retraced our way to the canal and thence to the lock at Deep Creek and into the tide-water. As we passed into the waters of the South branch of the Elizabeth River, it became evident that we were plowing our way through the fury of a northeast gale. Right into the teeth of it we went, shipping a sea with every wave being drenched with spume and spray. We enjoyed every inch of the tempestuous trip up the river and landed at the float at Norfolk in the afternoon, looking like three drowned rats. We had, however, no regrets, except for the pictures of the Dismal Swamp which had not materialized.

I was determined to obtain pictures of the swamp in summer at whatever cost of time or effort. September, 1906, may well be regarded as a summer month both as regards the temperature and the foliage of this, the greenest summer in my recollection.

Accordingly, on Saturday, September 22nd, I again left Norfolk in the same small launch that we had used the week before. On this occasion, the photographer and myself were accompanied by Mr. 71 John Allen. There were with us, likewise, the young engineer who had recovered the gun and a young friend of his whom we took along to steer the launch.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when we started and the sun had disappeared and the moon risen when we got into the tortuous channel of Deep Creek which we threaded with safety. When we arrived at the foot of the lock at Deep Creek we found three huge barges and a tiny tug—the *Mollie* —waiting to be locked. We entered the lock with one of the barges and the tug and were raised with them to the upper level. The locking of these craft in the moonlight presented a scene that I would have liked to be able to perpetuate on canvas. When the last of the monsters—which looked far too bulky to ever get through the canal—was safely elevated to the upper waters, we went into executive session to conclude where we were going to sleep, as our boat was too small to accommodate five persons and there is no hotel or inn at Deep Creek. The problem was solved by Mr. Boynton, the Assistant Superintendent of the Canal and Water Company, from whom we had already received many courtesies. He offered us the use of his offices, on the upper floors of which were rooms with beds in them which had not been occupied for a long time. As a special favor I was allowed to sleep on the lounge in the office. Mr. Boynton also assisted us to prepare supper and contributed some of the finest honey in Virginia made by his own bees out of the wild flowers of the Dismal Swamp. 72 Thus for the second time we were comfortably housed when we had expected to rough it, and with grateful hearts we rested well.

While we were eating supper a small black head appeared at the window. The black head was surmounted by wool and in the face of it were two of the shrewdest and merriest brown eyes that ever graced the countenance of a little negro boy. With no sign of embarrassment the black face inquired:

“What is you-all doin' down heah on the kun'el?”

Joe—for that was his name, although it should surely have been “Kim,” whose counterpart he was in all but color—was invited in to have some bread and honey, but it must be truthfully recorded that he had invited himself before the official invitation was recorded. He proved to be a most engaging child and a stupendous, ingenious, picturesque

and delightful liar. He ate his supper with great gusto but without embarrassment. He demanded whiskey which he did not get. He was barely ten years old, he “reckoned.” My two companions were so fascinated by his weird recitals that they hopelessly spoiled the child by heaping largesse upon him. Joe was sojourning temporarily, he informed us, on the “drudge” (dredge) then lying in the canal which he invariably pronounced “kun'el.” His father died, he said, when he was three years old, and his mother departed this life when Joe was four. Yet he remembered perfectly many things antedating his father's death and he quoted his mother with astonishing mendacity. Joe 73 told us a fish story. When the tide-water, during a terrible storm backed up so far into Deep Creek as to “pizen” the fish, Joe waded into the water and with his bare hands captured a German Carp as large as himself. He was not very strong on the flora and fauna of the Dismal Swamp. He could, however, enumerate a “hang,” a wild cattle and a billy goat as being indigenous to the place. Joe appreciated the friendly interest of my two companions to such an extent that when at bedtime Mr. Boynton with assumed severity, ordered him to “skidoo,” he burst into tears and reluctantly retired into the outer darkness. Although we had offered him fabulous sums if he would produce worms for bait at daylight, he must have overslept himself on the “drudge,” for we saw him no more. We were sorry to lose him for he presented a splendid study for the sociologist and possessed a most engaging personality—to such an extent, indeed, that I felt sure that if Rudyard Kipling had found him he would have marked him for his own and given to the world the negro prototype of “Kim.”

At three o'clock in the morning, I went out to observe the weather and much to my dismay found it raining. Fortunately, it was only a shower and when the day broke I have never seen anything more beautiful than the sunrise at Deep Creek. The eastern sky was a gorgeous mass of changeful color; the air was delightfully balmy and the song of the water in the wasteway mingled with those of the awakening 74 birds. The quaint lock and its surroundings formed a picturesque foreground, sufficient to satisfy the soul of any artist. I called Allen, and arrayed in the garb of Adam, together we plunged into the dark waters

of the canal. The water was warm but the swim proved very refreshing, giving us strength and energy to prepare breakfast.

We hurriedly photographed the lock and its surroundings and immediately got under way as we were anxious to reach Lake Drummond as early as possible and we had more than twelve miles and a “carry” before us. As we passed Wallaceton, we waved a greeting to those on shore but did not have time to land. Shortly after we had turned into the Feeder, Allen shot a large water moccasin that was swimming with his head held out of the water. He sank before we could reach him. Arrived at the base of the Feeder lock we transferred the necessary things to the upper canal where we were greeted pleasantly by “Captain Jack,” who procured for us frying pans and other utensils we had left with him. We replaced our apparatus and necessaries in the good old fellow's flat bottomed boat and started for Lake Drummond.

The current in the Feeder did not run so strong as the week before and its surface was placid as a mirror and equally as reflective. We got several good views of this beautiful entrance to the lake which was at its best as our boat was rowed out on to its bosom. The morning was perfect and the surface of the water as 75 smooth as glass. It was the first time I had seen it unruffled and as it was the first time my companion had seen it, he was lost in admiration of the remarkable scene.

We spent hours on the lake getting fine pictures of the “tangled juniper” and ghosts of cypresses along its shores. Toward afternoon we began to feel the pangs of hunger, so we rowed back to “Camp Moore” where I made a fire while Allen fished. For bait he had a beautiful little speckled perch which “Captain Jack” had taken from the ruined lock with a hand net. His line was scarcely overboard when he pulled in a huge catfish. He caught a number of others not so large, which, after the irksome process of skinning, were placed in a frying pan with a plover which he had shot as we passed up the Feeder. Meanwhile we discovered within a few yards of our camp, vines laden with luscious muscadine grapes. But for shame at our greediness we would probably have continued eating them

until nightfall. As it was they caused us to partially neglect our more substantial meal. After we had secured some more pictures, the sky began to darken with clouds, and we concluded to return to the lock before it was too late to get some pictures there. As we passed through the Feeder I shot a snake on the bank which I concluded must be a pilot black snake. On lifting him into the boat we discovered that he bulged strangely at a part of his anatomy about two-thirds of the distance from his head to his tail, his length being about 76 four and a half feet. On reaching the lock we threw him ashore whereupon he suddenly returned to life and fought the oar with which we teased him with great ferocity, striking at it again and again. While in this active state we photographed him after which I put him out of his misery and performed an autopsy the result of which was that I removed from his interior department a full grown eat bird with feathers and all intact. The slight torpidity succeeding his meal had probably made him an easy victim to my gun.

We had sufficient sunlight left to secure several views of the picturesque old lock and its environment when the rain came down in a manner which we remembered all too well. We hurriedly stowed our apparatus and photographic plates in the launch and wishing God speed to old Jack, turned her nose toward Norfolk. Mr. Boynton put us through the Deep Creek lock with celerity after supplying us with more of his fine honey. Through the rain the little boat sped and while we arrived in Norfolk after dark in our usual condition of wetness and hunger, we were not dismayed because our expedition had been both pleasant and successful.

IN AUTUMN

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IN AUTUMN

If the Dismal Swamp were placed by nature in the latitude of New York or Connecticut, its varied foliage in autumn would become a splendid and barbaric blaze of color. As it is,

it is very beautiful, but subdued in tone compared with nature's autumn coloring in more northern latitudes.

It was November 10th, a beautiful, balmy day, when I ventured to explore the swamp in Autumn, this time with a party of friends in a small, but comfortable steam yacht. The fact that we were a whole day in getting under way indicated that the pervading influence of " *mañana* " has not yet been eliminated from Norfolk, busy and up-to-date as it is, and destined to become the metropolis of the South.

We reached Deep Creek by starlight, the more human of my companions playing poker on the way down the river, after the manner of men. The game lends itself to the study of men rather than of nature, so that I usually prefer to remain on the outside with the latter, from whom I receive more pleasure than from the holding of a "royal flush." After our yacht had been raised in the lock to the level of the Dismal Swamp canal, we were informed by the lock keeper in charge that Mr. Baxter had placed the lock 80 house at our disposal. We accepted his hospitality with eagerness. It came as a surprise to most of our party, but not to me, for the invitation had been extended to me at Norfolk over the telephone. After an adequate supper we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable for the night.

At daylight the next morning the horizon was obscured by haze and there was a slight chill in the air, but not more pronounced than I have experienced in the latitude of New York in August. The lock was filled with water, as a lumber barge in tow was expected to arrive from North Carolina. Pursuant to a threat that I had made the night before, I divested myself of my clothing, plunged into the canal and swam across it to the amazement of those of our party who recalled the fact that it was the 11th of November. The dark red water was icy cold, but the plunge was refreshing and no ill effects were experienced from it. There being some wonderful cooks among us, we were soon able to enjoy a camp breakfast that would have been a credit to Delmonico's. We then embarked on board our yacht the *Bessie,* and were soon steaming merrily along the waters of the Dismal Swamp

canal. From the hurricane deck of the little yacht I could overlook the country on either side of the canal, and obtain a better idea of its character than on previous visits.

At the broken “Feeder” lock we were greeted by “Captain Jack” Marsh, who supplied us with boats wherein we soon found ourselves on the bosom of the 81 beautiful lake of Desolation. The distant shores of the lake appeared entirely different from the aspect they presented in early summer. The somber green merging into inky blackness at the base was surmounted by a tone of quiet brown with splashes here and there of brilliant red which glowed like fire. Seen across the vista of the dark and ruffled waters of the lake the ensemble suggested nature in a melancholy mood which, to an extent, softened the overshadowing sense of desolation which Lake Drummond conveys to the mind.

As I sat at the divergent point where the waters that overflow a thousand miles of country broke through into the raceway at the disabled lock, I could not help feeling the exhilaration born of the fact that the mind of man alone, directing a little labor, can control and confine billions of tons of fluid and disperse it wheresoever he will.

At this spot the poet or philosopher ignores material value in his mental speculation. He sees the marvelous running water, and sits enthralled as he listens to its mellifluous but drastic message. There is balm for the bruised heart in the rushing murmur, the gurgling music of the passing stream.

And this is a stream of no ordinary moment. It drains an immense area where many wonders are to be found. It is blood and water every drachm of which is fraught with the fascinating mysteries of natural history. The water talks to you, but you must be able to interpret its language. It tells you 82 of the past, and whispers reverently of the God of Nature. It murmurs gently to you, it raises its voice and threatens you like a berating conscience at dead of night. Thus it talks and lures and scolds, this prehistoric water that has been and will be—always.

Mr. Snyder, with whom I had explored the swamp on a former occasion, was entranced with the great morass in autumn.

No picture, he said, whether of pen or brush, will ever do justice to the Dismal Swamp. At best, suggestions may be made and the imagination left to paint its various shapes and fancies on the brain. In its moods and tenses the swamp is as variable as a woman, but in the early fall when clad in the rainbow tints of changing foliage it is at its best, for then the mood of the great swamp is that of gentleness and peace, and in all its silent places the explorer finds the soothing influences which gently lead to dreams and meditation.

It is an inspiration in the early morning when the sun is just beginning to steal the night mist from the air to stand upon the deck of a launch and look away off into the tangled fastnesses as the boat is propelled swiftly through the placid waters of the canal on the way to Lake Drummond.

By this time the spell of the swamp is on the visitor and its mystery enthralls the soul—on all sides the forest primeval; pervading all, the silence of a great necropolis. But suddenly the launch shoots past a clearing, a house and barn loom large on the bank, 83 and it may be seen that here the ax and plow have won from the swamp broad acres, where man may dwell in comfort and roll up profits from the incomparably rich loam. This farm is Captain Wallace's, one of the pioneer planters of the swamp, who has more than twelve thousand acres, every foot of which has been cultivated. But it is not until the boat turns into the Feeder which connects the canal with Lake Drummond that the exquisite beauty of the trees and undergrowth may be seen in all their gorgeous loveliness and marvelous luxuriance. The air is clear and pure, no miasmatic mist arises to poison and kill, and the very waters laugh welcome to the weary soul.

The next stop is at the locks, half a mile from the lake, where “Captain Jack” Marsh, the old Hibernian lock keeper, does the honors. He is an open book of swamp lore, garrulous and original, and if he doesn't volunteer the information you want, just ask, and it shall

be given you, with embellishments added. Then to the lake, the great liquid heart of the swamp, an amber jewel set in a circlet of emerald. Once out upon its waters the visitor is filled with the exhilaration of the breezes that carry health and strength to him, and there is a joy in tossing the head back and letting the zephyrs blow.

There seems to be but little bird life in the swamp, and that detracts from the charm of this beautiful sheet of water and from the swamp itself, for the flight and song of the feathered folk is one of the chief delights of man. The waters of Lake Drummond 84 being a tincture of juniper water, birds do not seem to be attracted to it as a feeding ground, although occasionally ducks, geese or divers may be seen.

Fishing, however, is good, and the frying pan need never be empty, but it is with the gun that the real sport is to be had, for the hairy tribe, and some furbearing animals, are abundant, but difficult to get at. However, this only adds to the zest of the chase, and many a trophy may reward the hunter who has the patience and is willing to perform the labor necessary to reach those more sequestered nooks where bears, wild hogs and cattle, wild cats and other quarry are at home.

A two weeks' sojourn in camp at Lake Drummond would work wonders for the mental and physical well-being of any one weary and nerve-racked with the cares of business and the staling habits of ordinary city life. The daily use of the juniper water will purge the system of malarial poisons, and the sports of the chase, fishing and boating will make the eye clear, the brain active and the muscles strong.

Lake Drummond would make an ideal health resort, and a large hotel with boating and hunting facilities would attract thousands of visitors at all seasons of the year, provided that an electric line were run in connection, for the great drawback is the difficulty with which a trip to the swamp is fraught; for food, utensils, arms and ammunition must be carried, and the only way to reach the lake is by boat. The water 85 route down the canal is delightful, however, and with a fast boat the trip may be made in a day.

A visit to the swamp should not be made without a camera, for of all fields for the practice of the photographic art none can be richer in possibilities. Every mile of the canal, every foot of the lake's rim is fruitful of subjects that would make the heart of the photographer throb with delight and enthrall his artistic soul. The broad acres at Wallaceton and other places under cultivation, the canal locks, the water vistas, the cypress ghosts along the lake shore, the glades and open places in the woods, the tall pines, the logging camps, the forest pictures in myriad forms are worthy to be caught on paper or canvas and preserved. If left alone by legislation which now threatens to drain it for the purpose of reclaiming its broad acres for the use of husbandry, the Dismal Swamp may for a century remain to delight visitors with its beauties and its mystery, but even so, the woodman's ax is slowly eating its way to the shores of Lake Drummond, and the time will come when like the wooded places of the mountains and plains, the swamp will be shorn of its tree growth, and where now beauty and interest abide at every step only the blackened specters of dead and gone trees will stand sentinel over its denuded and burned-over surfaces. The time to see the swamp in its primeval loveliness is now and in the very near future, for like all things beautiful it must pass away before the encroaching commercialism of the times.

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The disselboom points out the doom that the world was made for man, and the ax sets the seal of his proprietorship upon the land in the silent places. May the day be far distant when the Great Dismal Swamp is effaced from the map of the world by the devastating hand of man.

IN WINTER

89

IN WINTER

It is an axiom in the theatrical world that revivals are often unprofitable, disappointing and sometimes dangerous. The same thing seen after an interval of time has elapsed

often suggests the idea that we were mistaken in our first impressions. It was with some misgivings, therefore, that I again visited the Dismal Swamp after waiting in vain for a chance to view it in the midst of a severe winter. Severe winters, however, are as rare as white robins in this section of the South and my dream of seeing the swamp forest transformed into fairy lacework has not yet been realized.

As I steered my small launch up the Elizabeth River and into the tortuous channel leading to Deep Creek, the ice-cold spray cut my face like a knife. The day was clear with occasional fleecy clouds obscuring the sun for a few moments. I observed that the water did not begin to show swamp color anything like so far from the source of supply as in the months of freshet, which I have before described. At Deep Creek I received the same kindness and courtesy as in former visits. The color of the water in the Dismal Swamp canal was distinctly muddy with a tinge of swamp red. The banks of the canal were of a dull 90 greenish brown relieved here and there with the bright foliage of an evergreen. The day was the 22nd of January, 1919. I observed no sign of wild life save an occasional robin or Virginia red bird and the inevitable turkey buzzard. When we turned into the Feeder the view became more picturesque and attractive as the regularity of the canal had grown somewhat monotonous. At the broken or fast decaying lock of the Feeder near Lake Drummond we encountered the striking figure of “Captain Jack” Marsh, who was awaiting us on the bank and from whom we received a hearty welcome. We accepted his offer of hospitality for the night and, after a good meal, proceeded to the lake in one of his flat bottomed boats.

The winter of 1910 had been one of extreme drought in this section and the water in Lake Drummond was said to be lower than ever before recorded. The water had receded fully one hundred yards from the normal edge of the lake and the grim cypress sentinels that I had seen formerly standing in the water were now far from the water's edge, changing the effect of the picture completely and losing somewhat in effectiveness. The same may be said of the wilderness of knotted and gnarled snags and roots of juniper and cypress. I made a careful examination of the waterless edge of the lake bed for evidences of burnt-

out peat basins, but found none. I assume that all surface evidence of the prehistoric fire that formed the lake—if such was the case—has long since

Midwinter Sunset

91 been obliterated. The water in the lake was dark brown in hue and decidedly muddy as it was likewise in the Feeder and canal. I accepted Captain Jack's reasonable theory regarding this condition. He said that owing to the drought the water in the lake was so shallow that the strong wind agitated it to such an extent that it stirred up the mud from the bottom. He said he had never before seen it quite so muddy as during this dry winter.

On this occasion myself and companions stayed two days in the swamp camping over night. During the night the Feeder acquired a thin coating of ice of sufficient strength to bear the weight of a medium size stick or stone. It was possible to smash through it with a boat, but it cut the oars and sides of the batteau. The ice quickly disappeared, however, under the rays of the midday sun. We managed to get several photographs of this frozen Feeder. Much to my regret no snow fell while we were in the swamp.

Lake Drummond, always weird and impressive at night, is doubly so in mid-winter. There is no sound save that of the wind which I have seldom found absent from the face of its waters. The dark outline of its shores suggests a region mysterious and awesome. A suggestion of the supernatural grips the heart and one listens involuntarily for the dip of the paddle of the white canoe. The moon casts a pale and cold effulgence over the noted scene while, supplementing her, the constellations are freezing in a sky of icy blue.

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Somewhat dispirited I returned to civilization.

For three years I had waited for a severe winter wherein I might view the Swamp in its grip. But art is long and life is fleeting and I may never see the heart of the Dismal Swamp whitened with snow. Tradition has it that when, years ago, Lake Drummond was frozen over, a brilliant young artist left his friends, who were camping there, in order to bring

succor and supplies. It is said that he succeeded in both designs, but that, nearing the edge of the lake he fell through the ice and barely escaped with his life. But the chill, exposure and subsequent hardship left their mark upon him and brought him to an untimely end. Not, however, until he had depicted on canvas some striking views of the Great Swamp as he had seen it in the midst of a remarkably severe winter.

ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE

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ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE

The flora and fauna existing in the Dismal Swamp are not confined to its limits, although we are apt to think of the inhabitants and plant life of the great morass as of a kind to be found nowhere else. The florid imagination of the negro has peopled it with many strange animal forms that were never yet on sea or land. Even intelligent white men have allowed their fancy to run away with them when discussing the demons of this strange region.

Mr. O'Reilly said that strange as it may appear, the chief drawbacks of the Dismal Swamp are not its serpents, or bears, or other formidable wild creatures, but its flies, most pestilent of which are the yellow fly, before which for six weeks in July and August even the colored “swampers” are forced to abandon the “gum” roads. The yellow fly raises a burning blister with every bite; and, helped by the “red-horse mosquito,” gnats and gallinippers, can, it is said, kill a mule.

He also said that the largest wild animal (except cattle) found in the Dismal Swamp is a black bear. Captain Wallace, killed thirty on his farm last winter (1888; by spring guns set around his cornfields), one of which weighed 850 pounds; and “Jim,” the 96 friendly “swamper” said he had counted twenty-seven bears crossing a “gum” road one morning on their way to a field on the Suffolk side of the swamps. There are also hog bear (from

the size), Seneca bear (white breast), panther, wild cat, deer, coon, opossum, rabbit, fox, squirrel, otter, weasel, and muskrat.

The Mammals of the Dismal Swamp have been hitherto somewhat neglected by scientific investigation. Dr. A. K. Fisher, in charge of Economic Investigations, in the Bureau of Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture, has under way a paper on this interesting subject which he hopes to complete when he can spare the time from more important duties.

I am indebted to Mr. John W. Daniel, Jr., of Lynchburg, for a list of Dismal Swamp Mammals, but, as he says, the list is necessarily an approximate one and not as exact as he would like to have it. It will do, however, as an index to the general nature of the Mammal fauna of the Swamp. It is as follows:

1. Opossum, Didelphis virginiana Kerr.

2. Southern Va. Deer, Odocoileus americanus americanus (Erxleben).

3. Southeastern Gray Squirrel, Sciurus carolinensis (Gmelin).

4. Fox Squirrel, Sciurus Ludovicianus. Custis.

5. Ground Squirrel, Tamias striatus striatus (Linnaeus).

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6. Flying Squirrel, Sciuroprerus volans (Linnaeus).

7. House Mouse, Mus muscalus (Linnaeus).

8. Roof Rat, Mus alexandrinos.

9. Harvest Mouse, Reithrodontomys lecontii Audobon and Bachman).

10. Rice Field Mouse, Oryzomys palustris (Harlan).

11. Golden Mouse, Peromyscua nuttali.

12. Dismal Swamp Lemming, Synaptomys —.

13. Dismal Swamp Musk Rat, Fiber macrodon-Merriam.

14. Albermarle Meadow Mouse, Microbus—Rhoads.

15. Cottontail, Lepus floridanus malloros (Thomas).

16. Marsh Hare, Lepus palustris.

17. Wild Cat, Lynx ruffus (Gueldenstaed).

18. Gray Fox, Urocyon cinercoargenteus (Moller).

19. Southeastern Otter, Lutra hudsonica zataxina (F. Cuvier).

20. Mink, Putorius vison lutensis Bangs.

21. Weasel, Putorius noveboracensis notius Bangs.

22. Skunk, Mephitis mephitica scrutator Bangs.

23. Raccoon, Procyon lotor (Linnaeus).

24. Black Bear, Ursus americanus Pallas.

25. Mole, Scalops aquaticus (Linnaeus).

26. Dismal Swamp Shrew, Blarina.

27. Fishers' Shrew, Sorex fisheri Merriam.

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28. Big eared Bat, Synotus macrotis.

29. Pipistrelle Pepistrellus.

Of possible occurrence:—

Neotoma—.

Wood Rat.

Sigmodon—.

Cotton Rat—.

Felis concolor.

Panther.

Canis occidentalis (Richardson).

American Wolf.

Spilogale.

Little Striped Skunk.

The so-called “Wild Cattle” found in the swamps are, of course, of no definite species. They are in origin merely wanderers from herds of domestic cattle.

In Colonel Byrd's time wild cat and panther were evidently regarded as table delicacies, for he says:

“Some of our People had Shot a great Wild-Cat, which was that fatal moment making a comfortable Meal upon a Fox Squirrel, and an Ambitious Sportsman of our Company claimed the merit of killing this monster after it was dead.

“The Wild-Cat is as big again as any Household Cat, and much the fiercest Inhabitant of the Woods. Whenever 'tis disabled it win tear its own flesh for madness. Altho a Panther will run away from a 99 Man, a Wild-Cat will only make a Surly Retreat, now and then facing about, if he be too closely pursued; and will even pursue in his turn, if he observe the least Sign of Fear or even caution in those that pretend to follow Him.

“The Flesh of this Beast, as well as of the Panther, is as white as veal, and altogether as sweet and delicious.”

Colonel Byrd speaks of many “thuckleberry Slashes” which afford a convenient harbor for wolves and foxes, and says:

“The first of these Wild Beasts is not so large and fierce as they are in other countries more Northerly. He will not attack a Man in the keenest of his Hunger, but run away from him, as from an Animal more mischievous than himself.

“The Foxes are much bolder, and will sometimes not only make a Stand, but likewise assault any one that would baulk them of their Prey. The Inhabitants here abouts take the trouble to dig abundance of Wolf Pits, so deep and perpendicular, that when a Wolf is once tempted into them, he can no more Scramble out again, than a Husband who has taken the Leap, can Scramble out of Matrimony.”

BOTANY OF THE SWAMP

Library of Congress

A proper study of the botany of the Dismal Swamp should possess a great fascination for the lover of plant life, but it is not given to the average observer to know more than the common name or nature of LC 100 trees, plants and flowers. Mr. Thomas H. Kearney of the Division of Botany of the Agricultural Department has made a somewhat exhaustive study of the botany of the region which will be of use to the student. I am indebted to Mr. Kearney's work for a clear view of the flora most in evidence of the Swamp.

Two principal formations distinguish the Dismal Swamp botanically, the Black Gum or Dark Swamp, covered with heavy deciduous forest, and the Light, Open or Juniper Swamp, originally in great part covered with an evergreen forest of White Cedar or “Juniper,” but now in many places almost destitute of trees and bearing a growth of shrubs, of cane, and of ferns and Peat Moss. The Black Gum is in great part a virgin formation; the Juniper while composed entirely of indigenous species, owes its present condition largely to the work of man. In the Black Gum forest the larger trees are such as lose their foliage in the autumn, even the bold Cypress being deciduous. The only evergreen among the large trees is the short leaf pine.

The most abundant tree of the deciduous forest is probably the Black Gum, although the Red Maple is plentiful and appears to be increasing more rapidly than any tree in the swamp.

Cypress, still the most notable tree in the swamp, was formerly much more abundant. At the margin of Lake Drummond, a belt of old Cypress, stumps, 101 many of gigantic size, is evidence of what once must have been a magnificent forest of this tree. The value of this wood for many purposes has caused so great a demand for it as to account for its now relative scarcity. It reproduces itself very slowly so that an area once gleaned is regarded as virtually exhausted. There are specimens in the swamp 120 feet high and four and five feet in diameter above the swollen base.

In many parts of the swamp cotton gum, known locally as papaw gum, is plentiful. It bears large leaves and fruit and is one of the first trees in the swamp to lose its leaves in autumn. The water ash is also abundant in places. It is a slender tree, growing to a height of about eighty feet, having a diameter of about two feet near its base. Among the large trees is also the willow oak found in the wettest parts.

“Bay” trees are abundant, especially near Lake Drummond. There are, likewise, Blue Beech, Black Willow, Black Alder, the Tulip tree and the Sweet Gum.

The few living old cypress trees which stand in Lake Drummond near the shore have huge, blocklike bases often eight or ten times as great in diameter as are the stems above the swelling. The most remarkable individual giant of this group is known to the swampers as “Samson's Maul.” The development of the curious “knees” on the roots of 102 cypress and of arched roots rising above the surface, in Cypress and Black Gum, contributes much to the weird aspect of this portion of the swamp.

Numerous large intertwined stems of woody lianas embrace the trunks and often climb to the tops of trees. Among them are the Supple Sack or rattan, the Yellow Jessamine, the Cross vine and Muscadine Grape which climb by twining, while the poison ivy clings to the bark by means of innumerable aerial roots. In Spring the yellow blossoms of Gelsemium and the deep colored trumpets of Bigonia are produced in great profusion. Decayed logs and stumps form the home of picturesque fungi. Liverworts and mosses are likewise abundant upon dead stumps and live tree bases. The mistletoe is abundant upon the branches of the Cypress. The big cane or reed is plentiful in the Black Gum forest where along the ditches it attains a height of fifteen to twenty feet. In some parts of the Black Gum forest ferns are abundant.

The prevailing tree in the “Juniper Swamp” is the White Cedar, known as “Juniper,” a wood of great commercial value. The Juniper swamp is usually not so wet as the Black Gum swamps. Unlike cypress, juniper ordinarily reproduces quite rapidly, so that from some

tracts of this forest in the Dismal Swamp, three cuttings of the timber have been made with profit within twenty years. Frequent fires, however, prevent a material increase of the area occupied by this tree. In forests where much juniper has been 103 removed other trees appear. Among them are the Loblolly Pine, the Sweet Bay, the Holly, Red Maple and Black Gum.

The “cane brake” covers extensive areas. The cane is a woody bamboo-like grass, known locally as “reeds” and grows usually to a height of about six feet. Along the ditches it reaches a height of fifteen feet forming an attractive and graceful plant. The ferns and flowers of the great swamp are many and beautiful. White violets are abundant at certain seasons and in the summer the ditches are carpeted with fragrant and graceful water lilies.

BIRDS OF THE SWAMP

During the middle of June, 1897, Mr. John W. Daniel, Jr., of Lynchburg, Virginia, in company with Mr. William Palmer and Mr. Paul Bartsch, spent a week collecting birds in the Lake Drummond region of the Great Dismal Swamp. Mr. Daniel says that as regards birds, the swamp is not especially rich with regard to species, although there is an abundance of individuals of certain forms. During his visit the country immediately adjacent to Lake Drummond was fairly well worked over, most of the collecting being done along the margins of the lake and its several small inlets. The list of birds observed in the Dismal Swamp by Mr. Daniel is herewith appended, with his remarks on the subject:

1. Double-Crested Cormorant (Phalacrocorax 104 dilophus). Accidental. A single individual taken on the lake near the southeastern shore.

2. Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias). Fairly abundant on the lake shore. Several noticed on the inlets. One taken on “Jericho Ditch,” near Suffolk.

3. Green Heron (Ardea virescens). Common. Many seen on the inlets.

4. American Woodcock (Philohela minor). Several noticed at twilight feeding near camp at junction of Washington and Jericho districts.

5. Turkey Vulture (Cathartes aura). Not very common. A few noticed.

6. Red-shouldered Hawk (Buteo lineatus). Quite abundant. A number observed in the timber near the southeastern shore of the lake.

7. Barred Owl (Syrnium nebulosum). Fairly abundant. Its hooting often heard at night. Frequents timber along the lake shore.

8. Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus). Not very common. Several heard hooting at night.

9. Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus). A few seen.

10. Downy Woodpecker (Dryobates Pubescens). Fairly common in woods of elevated parts.

11. Hairy Woodpecker (Dryobates Villosus). Fairly abundant in heavy timber along the lake.

12. Pileated Woodpecker (Ceophloeus). A few were seen in the heavy timber at the southeastern end of the lake.

13. Red-bellied Woodpecker (Malenerpes carolinus). 105 Fairly abundant in the timber. Mr. Palmer took two specimens.

14. Flicker (Colaptes auratus). Not uncommon in the woods of the higher grounds.

15. Chimney Swift (Chaetura pelagica). Quite abundant. We had the good fortune to observe a very interesting fact regarding these birds. Along the southeastern shore, growing in the lake some distance out from the shore line, are a number of large hollow

cypresses. The roots or “knees” of these trees extend upward and outward from the surface of the water, curving inward some distance up, and in most of them, between the water and the base of the tree proper, there are openings large enough for a canoe to enter. By pushing our canoe in these intervals between the roots, we were able to examine the interiors of the hollow trees. In these we found the swifts nesting in their primitive fashion, the nests being fastened to the interior walls about midway down. Mr. Bartsch secured a nest containing eggs thus situated.

16. Crested Flycatcher (Myiarchus crinitus). Quite abundant in timber near the lake shore.

17. Wood Pewee (Contopus virens). Common in woods along the lake shore.

18. Green-crested Flycatcher (Empidonax virescens). Not uncomon along the margins of the inlets, notably where the foliage forms a canopy over the water. A nest containing eggs was found on a limb overhanging an inlet.

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19. American Crow (Corvus americanus). Fairly common.

20. Towhee (Pipilo erythrophtkalmus). Abundant.

21. Cardinal (Cardinalis cardinalis). A few seen.

22. Summer Tanager (Piranga rubra). Fairly abundant in the thick woods along the southeastern lake shore.

23. Red-eyed Vireo (Vireo olivaceus). Fairly abundant in the thick woods along the shore of the lake.

24. White-eyed Vireo (Vireo noveboracensis). Fairly common among the the bushes and trees along the margin of the lake.

25. Black and White Warbler (Mniotila vari). Not very common. Frequents woods of higher grounds.

26. Prothonotary Warbler (Prothonotary). Decidedly the most abundant bird of the swamp. Everywhere common. Its beautiful plumage and odd song add a charm to the region, it being seen and heard in all kinds of weather and at all times of the day. Several nests in cavities of decayed trees, at slight height from the ground were examined.

27. Swainson's Warbler (Helinaia Awainsonii). Rare, frequent the cane brakes and dense growth of aquatic vegetation. Mr. Palmer took one and I captured a juvenile.

28. Worm-eating Warbler (Helmitherns vermivorus). 107 Abundant. Frequents the wooded parts along the shore of the lake.

29. Parula Warbler (Compsothlypis americana). Quite abundant. Nests in the hanging Spanish moss (Usnea) with which many of the cypresses were festooned.

30. Pine Warbler (Dendroica vigorsil). Not common.

31. Prairie Warbler (Dendroica discolor). Not very common. A few seen in the clearings near the lake shore at the northern end of the lake.

32. Louisiana Water Thrush (Seintus motacilla). Fairly common.

33. Maryland Yellow-Throat (Geothlypis trichas). Very abundant along the shore of the lake and among the aquatic plants and bushes that fringe the inlets. Noticed it as especially common along the edges of a log road at the northern end of the lake.

34. Hooded Warbler (Sylvania mitrata). Very abundant. Ranks second with the *P. Citrea* as the commonest species of the district. Several nests, one containing young, were examined. They were placed in the cane brake along the margins of one of the ditches.

35. American Redstart (Setophago ruticella). Abundant.

36. Catbird (Galecscoptes carolinensis). Very abundant.

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37. Carolina Wren (Thryothorns ludovicianus). Not common. A few heard singing.

38. White-Breasted Nuthatch (Sitta carolinensis). Fairly abundant in the woods at the southeastern shore of the lake.

39. Tufted Titmouse (Parus bicolor). Abundant.

40. Carolina Cluicadee (Parus Carolinensis). Abundant.

41. Wood Thrush (Turdus mustelinns). Common. Observed in the woods at the southeastern end of the lake.

Mr. Edward A. Moseley shot a magnificent bald eagle when he was canoeing on Lake Drummond with O'Reilly, and the latter's description of it was a fine prose poem. I presume Mr. Moseley still retains the mounted bird as a trophy and a memento. With regard to birds O'Reilly said:

“Here, for instance, are some of the birds we noted in a few days, many of them in great numbers: The catbird, robin, swamp canary, wren, sparrow, mocking-bird, whip-poor-will, red bird (a blaze of plumage), thrush (with a crown), yellow hammer, wood-pecker, owl (immense fellows), hawk, eagle, king-fisher, jay, heron, quail, wild turkey, woodcock, buzzard, crow, and numerous brilliant little birds of many species, whose names we did not know. In the winter the lake is fairly covered with geese, swans, and all kinds of duck. The bat, which I believe is not a bird, is at home here.”

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In September, 1728, Colonel William Byrd, wrote:

“Our Hunters brought us four wild turkeys, which at that Season began to be fat and very delicious, especially the Hens.

“These Birds seem to be of the Bustard kind, and fly heavily. Some of them are exceedingly large, and weigh upwards of 40 Pounds: Nay some bold Historians venture to say, upwards of 50. They run very fast stretching forth their Wings all the time, like the Ostrich, by way of Sails to quicken their Speed.

“They roost commonly upon very high trees, Standing near some River or Creek and are so stupefied by the Sight of Fire, that if you make a Blaze in the Night near the Place where they roost, you may fire upon them Several times successively, before they will dare to fly away.

“Their Spurs are so Sharp and Strong that the Indians used formerly to point Arrows with them, tho now they point them with a Sharp white Stone. In the Spring the Turkey Cocks begin to gobble, which is the Language wherein they make love.”

Dr. Paul Bartsch, the naturalist, made a second trip to the Dismal Swamp in June, 1899. He was accompanied by Mr. William Palmer of the National Museum and they entered the swamp from the Suffolk end of the Jericho Ditch. Dr. Bartsch made a study of the birds of the swamp and wrote a delightful account of his trip for the *Osprey Magazine.* Regarding the birds, Dr. Bartsch said in part:

“Voices of familiar birds greeted us on every hand; the swamp is filled with musical sound. There are the notes of the Maryland Yellow-throat, the Yellow-breasted Chat, and the ever noisy White-eyed Vireo, greeting you and calling to you long before you push your canoe from its moorings, and as you proceed down the canal, still other familiar sounds will reach your ear, for the fauna of the adjacent region mingles strongly with the birds which are

confined to the swamp proper, and such notes as those of the Prairie Warbler and the Chewink will linger for a long time."

For a number of miles therefore we do not have any heavy timber, bounding the canal, but a dense almost impenetrable second-growth of brush and shrubbery, which extends its branches and vainly attempts to overarch this watery way. On these arching branches the Arcadian Fly-Catcher finds a place where he may place his nest and cradle his young, away out of reach of the many reptiles which infest the region. This bird is a very abundant summer resident throughout the swamp, and its peculiar note is an ever conspicuous feature of the ditch. Its relative, the Great Crested Fly-Catcher, is also present, and its note is always more or less in evidence, but yet the Arcadian outnumbers him at least ten to one. Here and there the banks of brush give place to heavy beds of fern extending for some distance where the soil of the towpath furnishes them a foothold. Not unfrequently, too, the sides are bordered by a rank growth of cane, a welcome retreat of the Yellow-throat. 111 This bird assumes more and more the character of the Florida variety roscoe as one gets deeper into the interior.

The two most characteristic birds of the swamp make their appearance soon after one sets out from the landing, becoming more and more abundant as one approaches the lake. These are the two Swamp Wood Warblers, the Prothonotary and the Hooded, both abundant summer residents of the region. It is amongst scenes like these that I learned to appreciate the beauty of the Golden Swamp Warbler most, for here, indeed, his brilliant plumage seemed in accord with its surroundings. As he appeared for a moment like a blazing meteor passing down this gorgeous aisle to be swallowed up the very next by the sheltering wall of foliage, or perhaps as sometimes happened a pair would be observed in full chase, then indeed is when the Prothonotary Warbler appears at his best, for extreme animation is added, and the effect of the white in his tail feathers comes into play.

He is at all times a sprightly fellow, full of activity and music, and considerably on the wing, gliding rapidly from one place to another, rarely rising high above the lower vegetation, for

he is essentially a bird clinging closely to the proximity of Mother Earth and water, and yet he is truly arboreal. In his movements he differs from all his relatives. He does not possess that gleaning nature characteristic of so many members of his family, but seeks his food upon and among the abundant decaying moss-covered logs and 112 stumps, which have been accumulating here for ages, flitting from one to another, and extracting from them the insect food constituting his daily fare. Here again we must pause and comment upon his beauty. For what fairer picture could one imagine than Prothonotary clinging to a moss-covered cypress knee, perhaps only a foot above the water, with his head partly lowered and tilted as if gazing and admiring the reflections of his brilliant form in the enchanting scene mirrored beneath.

After passing some fifty yards into the timber, to where the undergrowth appears as a dense tangle of briars, cane and ferns I stopped and squeaked! just one note, reminding me of that of the Water-thrush, followed by a swift swish of the wing, and a Swainson's Warbler sat perched upon a slender twig not five feet from me. We gazed at each other for a moment: then he departed as suddenly as he had come. His position, manner of flight and attitude reminded me strongly of those of the lesser thrushes. This and another equally close and short glimpse were all that I managed to see of Swainson's Warbler on this trip. The bird is very shy and seclusive, and although I visited the locality again and again, and squeaked my most seductive squeak till my throat was hoarse and sore, I failed to call him from his hiding.

I knew he was present, for his sweet clear burst of melody, pure as that of the Water-thrush, but sweeter far in theme and execution, came to us now and then from his favorite place of hiding. We 113 added but a single specimen of this Warbler on this trip, one that Mr. Palmer persuaded to come to the edge of the thicket bordering a boggy road, several miles from the place where I had observed my bird. A pair of Great Crested Flycatchers appeared to be nesting in a cavity in one of the upper branches of one of the Cypress trees, while in another a pair of pretty Parula Warblers had concealed their neat home in a bunch of gray Tillandsia which drapes these silent sentinels of the lake. Toward noon

these trees and bordering stumps were visited by strings of Turkey Buzzards which would stop for a drink and perhaps a bit of a bath before resuming their graceful searching flight. We spent the greater portion of the day collecting plants, amongst them a beautiful lot of a new fern, since described as Dryopteris goldiana celsa by Mr. Palmer, and many Prothalial fronds and young stages of a number of species, which were growing abundantly in the rich, moist, peaty soil, exposed by the deep cut made for the Outlet Canal. The Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers seemed to be quite abundant in the large timber bordering the canal, and the loud buoyant notes of the latter were very pronounced as they went laughing from place to place. Red-shouldered Hawks, perhaps of the Florida variety, were also quite abundant, and judging from the hooting at night Syrnium nebulosum alleni was well represented in the swamp fauna.

We added a female Wood Duck, with her flock of 114 young ducklings, to our list of swamp inhabitants, just before we left its bounds.

We were well pleased with our week's sojourn in this part of the country and sorry indeed to part from the region which had given us so many delightful moments as well as experiences to the contrary, and almost wished that we might return to this home of solitude and simplicity, to camp again on the edge of beautiful Lake Drummond.

We now append a list of birds observed on the two summer trips into the swamp.

Florida Cormorant.

Wood Duck.

Great Blue Heron.

Green Heron.

Woodcock.

Turkey Buzzard.

Red-shouldered Hawk.

Florida Barred Owl.

Great Horned Owl.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

King Fisher.

Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Downy Woodpecker.

Hairy Woodpecker.

Pileated Woodpecker.

Chimney Swift.

Ruby-throated Hummer.

Kingbird.

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Great Crested Flycatcher.

Arcadian Flycatcher.

Wood Pewee.

Crow.

Towhee Bunting.

Cardinal.

Barn Swallow.

Purple Martin.

Waxwing.

Red-eyed Vireo.

Warbling Vireo.

White-eyed Vireo.

Black and White Creeper.

Prothonotary Warbler.

Swainson's Warbler.

Worm-eating Warbler.

Parula Warbler.

Yellow Warbler.

Yellow-throated Warbler.

Pine Warbler.

Prairie Warbler.

Oven Bird.

Louisiana Water-thrush.

Maryland Yellow-Throat.

Yellow-breasted Chat.

Hooded Warbler.

Redstart.

Catbird.

House Wren.

Carolina Wren.

Nuthatch.

Tufted Tit.

Carolina Chickadee.

Wood Thrush.

FISHES OF THE SWAMP

The Dismal Swamp waters are rich in fish both as to quantity and variety. On this subject O'Reilly wrote in 1888: “The fish in the lake, great quantities of which we caught, and on which, indeed, we chiefly lived, are the speckled perch or ‘Frenchman,’ a delicious fish, the raccoon perch, chub (a black bass), yellow perch (small), flyer, garfish, catfish (very

numerous), gaper, blackfish (thirty inches long), roach and eel. There are plenty of pike in the canals."

A complete list furnished me by Commissioner Bowers of the Bureau of Fisheries, embraces a total of thirty-eight species, each of which has been taken either in Lake Drummond or in the waters tributary to or connected with it. The list gives first, the common name and second, the scientific name:

1. Bullhead; Horned pout. Ameiurus nebulosus (Le Sueur).

2. Bullhead. Ameiurus erebennus Jordan.

3. Mad Tom. Schilbedoes insignis (Richardson).

4. Eel. Anguilla chrysypa Rafinesque.

5. Chub sucker. Erimyzon sucetta (Lacepede).

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6. White Mullet; Sucker. Moxostoma papillosum (Cope).

7. Silver Minnow. Mybognathus nuchalis Agassiz.

8. Roach; Bream; Golden shiner. Abramis chrysoleucas (Mitchil).

9. Minnow. Notropis hudsonius saludanus (Jordan and Brayton).

10. Minnow. Notropis ameonus (Abbott).

11. Minnow. Notropis procne (Cope).

12. Minnow. Notropis Niveus (Cope).

13. Anchovy. Stolephorus Mitchilli (Cuvier and Valenciennen).

14. Alewife; Branch Herring. Pomolobus?pseudoharengus (Wilson).

15. Hickory shad; Gizzard shad. Dorosoma cepedianum (Le Sueur).

16. Killfish. Fundulus diaphanus (Le Seur).

17. Top minnow. Gambusia affinis (Baird and Girard).

18. Fish of the Dismal Swamp. Chologaster cornutus Agassiz.

19. Mud Minnow. Umbra pygmaea (De Kay).

20. Banded pickerel. Esox americanus Gmelin.

21. Pickerel; Jack; Green pike. Esox reticulatus (Le Sueur).

22. Pirate perch. Aphredoderus sayanus (Gilliams).

23. Round sunfish; Flier. Centrarchus sayanus (Gilliams).

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24. Calico bass; Grass bass; Barfish; Strawberry bass. Pomoxis sparoides (Lacepede).

25. Mud Sunfish. Acantharchus pomotis (Baird).

26. Sunfish. Enneacanthus obesus (Baird).

27. Sunfish. Enneacanthus gloriosus (Holbrook).

28. Yellow belly; Redbreast bream. Lepomis auritus (Linnaeus).

29. Common sunfish; bream; Pumpkin seed; Sunny.

30. Sunfish. Eupomotis holbrooki (Cuvier and Valenciennes).

31. Bayou bass; Large-mouthed black bass; Oswego bass, Green bass. Micropterus salmoides (Lacepede).

32. Striped Bass; Rockfish; Rock. Roccus lineatus (Bloch).

33. White perch. Morone americana (Gmelin).

34. Darter. Ioa vitrea (Cope).

35. Tessellated darter; Grand oranchee. Boleocoma nigrum olmstedi (Storer).

36. Darter. Gadropterus peltatus (Stauffer).

37. Darter. Boleichthys fusiformis (Girard).

38. Sole; Hog choker. Achirus fasciatus (Lacepede).

SNAKES OF THE SWAMP

With regard to the snakes in the swamp, it is better to be guided by the cool minds and carefully collected facts of the scientists than to follow the heated narratives of laymen with too much credence.

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Professor Leonhard Stejneger, Curator of the Division of Reptiles in the United States National Museum, informs me that he knows of no authentic work on the subject of the snakes of the Dismal Swamp, but that several of the officers and collaborators of the museum have visited the locality, notably Professor Bartsch, Dr. Ralph, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Prentiss, and Mr. Daniel and their collections have been deposited in the National Museum. None of these gentlemen paid special attention to snakes and the number of species collected is, therefore, small. Although the list is far from exhaustive, Professor Stejneger, has in the collection in his charge specimens of the following species, the

names being those used in Jordan's manual of Vertebrate Animals of Northern United States in which the characteristics of the snakes mentioned also appear:

Farancia abaracura—Horn Snake

Thamnophis sauritus—Riband Snake

Thamnophis sirtalis—Common Garter Snake

Natrix fasciata—Southern Water Snake

Natrix erythrogaster—Red Bellied Water Snake

Callopettis obsoletus—Pilot Snake

Bascanion constrictor—Black Snake

Lanepropeltis getulus—Chain Snake

Agristrodon piscivorus—Water Moccasin

Crotalus horridus—Banded Rattlesnake

Of these only the last two are poisonous, the others are perfectly harmless. The first mentioned species is a burrowing snake. Of the other species enumerated 120 there are only four which are more intimately associated with the water, viz., the two Thamnophis and the two Natrix species, though Thamnophis sirtalis less so than the other three.

Some of the following species from the general region, says Professor Stejneger, will undoubtedly be found in the immediate neighborhood of the swamp: Carphophiops amormus; Virginia Valeriaa; Storeria occipitomaculata; Storiria dekagi; Callojecltio guttatus; Opheodrys aeotivus; Lispeltis vernalio; Diadophis punctatus; Lampropiltio doliatus; Lampropiltio rhombomaculatus; Heterodon platirhinos; Agkistrodon contortrix.

None of these are water snakes and only the last mentioned species, the Copperhead, is poisonous.

Mr. Raymond L. Ditmars, Curator of Reptiles, New York Zoölogical Park, to whom I am indebted for information on the subject, writes me that the snakes of the Dismal Swamp are much the same as those found in the North, with the exception of a few addititonal species, such as the King Snake and the Pine Snake, both of which are harmless. The Dismal Swamp lies too far north to include the strictly southern reptiles. Its prevailing serpents are harmless water snakes, Tropidonatus (Natrix) and Entaenia. Sifting the matter then, as a layman who knows nothing about snakes, I reach the conclusion that though snakes have been numerous in the Dismal Swamp—and their numbers are kept down by wild hogs and other agencies—there are but three 121 venomous species, or four if we include the Diamond Back Rattlesnake. They are the Banded and Diamond Backed Rattlesnake, the Copperhead and the Water Moccasin. Three of these I shall describe, following Mr. Ditmars.

The Copperhead Snake, Ancistrodon contortrix, is a strongly marked species and easily determined. The body is a light chestnut brown, sometimes assuming a tinge of pink, crossed with dark, reddish-brown bands, which are narrow on the back and wide on the sides, resembling from above the outlines of a dumbbell; these bands are darkest at their edges, particularly on the sides of the body. The head is somewhat lighter than the body, usually exhibiting a coppery tinge or bright hazel brown; the sides of the head are of a still paler hue. The line of intersection of the lighter color with the coppery tints of the top begins behind the eye and runs to the angle of the mouth. Beneath, the body is pinkish white, with two rows of reddish-brown blotches; the scales are keeled; the pupil of the eye is elliptical.

Although the head of this serpent is triangular and distinct from the neck, the general appearance of the reptile would not immediately lead the uninitiated to class it as a poisonous snake. Several of our local serpents are quite as heavy in body as the

formidable Copperhead. The Milk Snake, the Hog-nosed Snake and the Water Snake are sometimes confounded with the Copperhead, partly on account of a similarity of pattern, and partly on account of the stout bodies of 122 the last two species. From the Milk Snake the Copperhead may be at once distinguished by its keeled scales; from the Hog-nosed Snake and the Water Snake by the arrangement of the plates under the tail. Beginning from the vent, these broad plates in the harmless reptiles are in two rows; in the Copperhead they are arranged in one row, extending across the under side of the tail like the plates of the belly, with the exception (in some specimen) of a few scattered, divided plates near the tip of the tail. From all the harmless snakes the Copperhead may be distinguished by the presence of a pit between the eye and the nostril, a characteristic of the crotaline snakes that has led to their popular title, “the Pit Vipers.”

The upper jaw of the Copperhead is provided with two long fangs which fold against the roof of the mouth when the latter is closed. These teeth are hollow and are provided with an opening at the tip for the ejection of poison. They are precisely the same in their formation as the needle of a hypodermic syringe. The poison is secreted in glands behind the reptile's eyes, and is forced through the fangs by muscular contraction during the act of biting.

The Copperhead is the most beautiful of our local snakes, its delicate color so closely resembling the falling leaves of autumn that it is with difficulty to be distinguished from its surroundings at that time of the year. When annoyed, it imparts a rapid, vibratory movement to the tail, which when among dried leaves produces a distinct rattling, audible for several 123 feet. Its bite is very dangerous, but the snake is not habitually hostile and it prefers flight to combat. When cornered, however, it will fight bravely, striking from a partly coiled position. The food of this snake consists of small mammals, birds and frogs. From six to nine young are produced alive during August or early in September. The tails of the young snakes are bright sulphur-yellow, which tint gradually fades as the reptile matures. A large adult specimen will measure three feet in length.

Range: Massachusetts to Florida, westward to Texas.

With the rattle as an unvarying characteristic, the dangerous Banded Rattlesnake, Crotalus horridus, may be instantly recognized. Female specimens are generally sulphur-yellow or brown, with black, or dark brown transverse bands; the males are usually very dark brown or black with little trace of the bands, except yellow markings that show the location of the borders of the transverse blotches. The scales are roughly keeled. The head is triangular and covered with small, irregular scales.

The young are produced during the latter part of August to the number of about a dozen. They grow rapidly and acquire, on an average, three joints of the rattle every year; the young snakes are born with a single “button” on the tail. The average length of a mature snake of this species is from three and a half to four feet.

Subsisting upon larger prey such as squirrels, rats, 124 young rabbits and birds, the rattlesnake is a bolder reptile than the Copperhead. Provided with proportionally longer fangs and a more virulent poison, the bite of this species is more dangerous than the former. Its range of distribution is from Massachusetts to Northern Florida and westward to Texas.

The Water Moccasins belong, as do the rattle-snakes, to the subfamily of Pit Vipers—Crotalinae. On each side of the head, between the eye and the nostril, is a deep pit. By this characteristic they are easily determined. While the harmless snakes have two rows of plates on the under surface of the tail the Moccasin has a single row of plates for the greater length of the tail. Harmless snakes have the pupil of the eye round; the Water Moccasin has an elliptical cat-like-pupil.

The color of the Moccasin is dull olive, with wide, black transverse bands. It abounds in swamps and sluggish waterways.

When we leave the scientists and listen to the discourses of laymen on the subject of snakes, there is no telling where it may lead us. Snake, like fish stories, have long since passed into the domain of comic journalism.

Colonel William Byrd, the first white man to explore and describe the Dismal Swamp [in 1728], has some remarkable things to say about snakes and their habits. John Boyle O'Reilly was a keen observer and a truthful narrator, yet he and the scientists do not agree on the subject of snakes. A woman writer, 125 Mrs. Lucy Redd Wise, tells a snake story of the Swamp that might be deemed fanciful if it were written by a man. The tales that the negroes in the swamp tell about snakes must be taken with many grains of salt, for the negro is ever a wonder weaver, with the heated imagination of a child.

Col. Byrd encountered snakes of various kinds in the Swamp; of one of them he says:

“By the way, one of our men killed another Rattle Snake with two rattles, having a large Gray Squirrel in his Maw, the head of which was already digested, while the body remained still entire.

“The way these Snakes catch their prey is this: They ogle the poor little animal till by force of the Charm, he falls down stupified and senseless on the Ground. In that condition the snake approaches and moistens first one Ear and then the Other with his Spawl, and after that the other parts of the Head, to make all Slippery. When that is done, he draws this member into his Mouth, and after it, by Slow Degrees, all the rest of the Body.”

Col. Byrd was nothing if not practical, and in his narrative, passes naturally from poison to antidote when he says:

“I found near our Camp some Plants of that kind of Rattle Snake Root, called Star-grass. The leaves shoot out circularly, and grow Horizontally and near the ground. The Root is in Shape not unlike the Rattle of that Serpent, and is a strong antidote against the bite of it. It is very bitter and when it 126 meets with any Poison, works by Violent Sweats, but where

it meets with none, has no Sensible Operation but that of putting the Spirits into a great Hurry, and so of promoting Perspiration.

“The Rattle-Snake has an utter Antipathy to this Plant, insomuch that if you smear your hands with the juice of it, you may handle the Viper Safely. This much I can say of my own Experience, that once in July, when these Snakes are in their greatest Vigor, I besmeared a Dog's Nose with the Powder of this Root, and made him trample on a large Snake Several times, which, however, was so far from biting him, that it perfectly Sickened at the Dog's Approach, and turned its head from him with the Utmost Aversion.”

Again: “We observed Abundance of St. drew's Cross in all the Woods we passed thro', which is the Common Remedy used by the Indian traders to cure their horses when they are bitten by Rattle-Snakes. It grows on a Strait Stem, about eighteen Inches high, and bears a Yellow Flower on the Top, that has an Eye of Black in the Middle, with Several Pairs of Narrow Leaves Shooting out at right Angles from the Stalk over against one another.

“This Antidote grows Providentially all over the Woods, and upon all Sorts of Soil, that it may be everywhere in Case a Disaster should Happen, and may be had in all hot months while the Snakes are dangerous.

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“We found in the low Ground Several Plants of the Fern Root, which is said to be much the Strongest Antidote yet discovered against the Poison of the Rattle-Snake. The leaves of it resemble those of Fern, from whence it obtained its Name. Several Stalks shoot from the same Root about six inches long, that lie mostly on the Ground. It grows in a very Rich soil, under the Protection of Some tall tree, that Shades it from the Meridian Beams of the Sun. The Root has a faint, Spicy taste, and is preferred by the Southern Indians to all other Counter-Poisons in this Country.

“But there is another sort preferred by the Northern Indians, that they call Seneca Rattle-Snake Root, to which wonderful Vertues are ascribed in the Cure of Pleurisys, Feavers, Rhumatisms, and Dropsys; besides it being a powerful Antidote against the Venom of the Rattle-Snake.”

Regarding the farfamed virtues of Rattle-Snake oil the Colonel says:

“Though it may be very difficult to find a certain cure for the Gout, yet it is not improbable but some things may ease the Pain, and Shorten the Fits of it, and those medicines are most likely to do this that Supple the Parts, and clear the Passage Through the Narrow Vessels that are the Seat of this cruel Disease. Nothing will do this more Suddenly than Rattle-Snake's Oyl, which will even penetrate the Pores of Glass when warmed in the sun.

“It was unfortunate, therefore, that we had not 128 taken out the Fat of those Snakes we had killed some, time before for the Benefit of so useful an Experiment.”

O'Reilly, who was fascinated by the beauty and charm of the Dismal Swamp, gives a graphic description of his experience with snakes. He says:

“Booted to the thigh, armed with knife and gun, is the only safe way to enter the Cane brake, or, indeed, to depart in any way from the open spaces of the Swamp. During our exploring, we did not see bear or panther or wild cat; but whoever leaves the beaten ways of the swamp must be prepared to meet these inhabitants.

“For three days, with a cool wind and nightly rain, with the exception of one large King-snake which we killed on a ‘gum road,’ we had seen nothing more noxious than a blue lizard with a red head, a harmless and friendly little fellow who seems to have no fear of man.

“Our first snake was killed in this way: On our second day, while passing up a ‘gum road,’ we came upon a large dark-skinned snake lazily coiled on a sunny log. Having killed

him by striking him with a heavy cane, we were afterwards told by Abeham that it was a harmless King-snake, and that, moreover, it spent its time destroying the poisonous snakes in the swamp, which it does by crushing them.

“On the morning of the fourth day we woke up, 129 and both had the same thought—a swim. ‘Jim,’ a very interesting colored ‘boy,’ from a neighboring ‘swampers’ camp, was outside, and he stared aghast at our preparations.

“‘No, no, don't do dat!’ he said earnestly.

“‘Why not?’

“‘Moccasins!’ with a grave head-shake.

“We did not jump in; we contented ourselves with a bath in the boat. But we laughed at ‘Jim,’ and sat down to breakfast in the open air. In a few minutes we stopped laughing.

“‘What is that swimming out there?’ asked Moseley, pointing to a slight dark streak about twenty yards out in the lake.

“‘A moccasin!’ cried Abeham, getting on his feet excitedly. Abeham was used to snakes, but terribly afraid of them. ‘Shoot him!’ We shot him; slight and short as he looked swimming, he was four feet seven inches in length. In a minute another—his mate probably—swam past and was killed, and was exactly the same length.

“The moccasin swims with its head and about fourteen inches of its back over the water. The head is very small for the thickness and length of the snake. It swims rapidly with a wavy motion. It is dark on the back, with a violently red belly, like inflamed scales, from the loose skin of the under jaw to the tail. Most of those we saw (and after that day we ceased to count them) were of an average length of about four and a half to five feet, thick as a

man's 130 arm and repulsively fat. The prevailing suggestion of the creatures when you kill them is fatness.

“The most dangerous snake in the swamp is one of the smallest, called the poplar snake. He is about twelve inches in length, green in color, like that of the poplar tree in which he lives. We escaped him most fortunately, for before we heard of him, we had deflowered many poplars of their beautiful blossoms. This snake is a direful pest; from his size and color he is not easily seen; and his poison is said to resemble the rattle-snake's.

“The water moccasin literally infests all quarters of the swamp. Other snakes, more or less numerous, are the black snake (sometimes nine feet long), the horn snake, and the jointed snake. Abeham and Jim said that they had often killed this latter questionable reptile, and that it had broken into pieces about two and a half inches long.

“In case of snake bites the unvarying practice of the ‘swampers’ is to bind the limb above the wound tightly, twisting a stick in the ligature, then suck the wound thoroughly, and afterwards drink copiously of whiskey. They say that this treatment invariably cures all bites in the swamp, excepting the rattler's. But we only met three or four persons who had known of actual snake bites.

“One more word about the snakes. One night (the early summer nights are cool in the swamp) we had an immense fire outside the hut, the logs, five or six feet long, standing on end and sending up a 131 roaring flame. Several ‘swampers,’ who had come to sit at our fire and chat, began fishing for catfish, which are attracted by a light. They were pulling them in briskly, and one pulled in a large eel, over two feet in length and very thick. They instantly beheaded him and pulled his skin off, leaving the flayed body to wriggle about in the dust. It was horribly like a snake, and we had to tell Abeham to throw it into the water. The circle had drawn closer to the kindly flame, when one said, pointing to a dark, round object about three yards from the fire: ‘Is that another eel?’

“Every eye was fastened on it, and no one spoke, but Abeham quietly went for a gun, and without a word shot the intruder. It was a Moccasin that had come out of the cane brake, and coiled himself to enjoy the fire.”

Mrs. Lucy Redd Wise, daughter-in-law of Captain William F. Wise, who has been referred to in this chronicle, tells in the *Jamestown Magazine,* of a trip she took to Lake Drummond by way of the Jericho Canal. Mrs. Wise describes a duel to the death between a Water Moccasin and a King Snake as follows:

“Cicero dropped his pole with a screech: ‘Lawdy, Cap'n! Look at dat snake!’

“The captain stopped the little engine and drew an old-fashioned pistol from his ‘kit.’

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“An enormous water moccasin—the captain said he was ‘a monster, even fer the Swamp,’—was lying on a high, open spot ten feet from the side of the boat. His loathsome, yellow-brown body was coiled for more than half his length. His head and a foot of his body were erect and moving slowly to and fro. ‘See, he's charmin' that bird,’ said the captain.

“And sure enough, a yard away, a brown thrush was perched motionless on a tussock, watching the snake as though fascinated; but whether ‘charmed’ or paralyzed with fear is a question.

“The captain took aim, but lowered his arm and cried: ‘Look!’

“A rustle and whirr, and quick as lightning's flash something black whizzed toward the moccasin.

“‘Now for some sport! It's a king-snake, and thar'll be a pretty scrap,’ the captain exclaimed.

“So swift were the movements of the newcomer, we could scarcely make out more than a black streak. The thrush, with a weak cry, flew away. The moccasin seemed flustered, but assumed the defensive. Around and around him flashed the king-snake, the moccasin clumsily turning to keep up his guard. Around and around, in everlasting circles, faster and faster raced the king. The moccasin was beginning to tire.

“‘Ten to one on the king!’ shouted some one, but nobody took the bet.

“Suddenly there was a spring, so quick one scarcely saw it, and two bodies were twisting and writhing 133 together. As their movements grew slower, we could make out the lithe, black body of the king twisted around and around the moccasin. His folds grew tighter and tighter, and the moccasin soon ceased to struggle. His spine was broken in a dozen places. The king released himself from the corpse as the captain raised his arm.

“‘Oh, spare the king!’ I cried, but too late. His corpse lay beside his vanquished foe. Poor king! He had fought bravely, and deserved a better fate.”

HUMAN DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE DISMAL SWAMP

Colonel William Byrd, of Westover, who I think might appropriately be called the Samuel Pepys of Virginia, owing to his quaint and sprightly diary, included an account of the Dismal Swamp—called by him “The Dismal”—in his “History of the Dividing Line.” In 1727 the long dispute over the North Carolina-Virginia boundary was ready to be settled and Byrd was one of the Virginia Commissioners. The line was run in 1728, and thus in that year the Dismal Swamp was first observed and described by a man of education and discernment.

Like most writers of his day, Colonel Byrd was inclined to be credulous. Mr. John Spencer Bassett, who edited a very fine edition of his writings, referring to his description of the Dismal Swamp, says:

“Byrd's description of this swamp is too unfavorable. The place is not uninhabited at this day. Persons who live in the adjacent counties go thither to hunt bears and deer, as well as wild cats. In the swamp is Lake Drummond, a favorite angling ground for local sportsmen. The water, which from its dark color might well seem unwholesome to the observers, is discolored by roots of the juniper trees, 138 which abound there. It is popularly called ‘Juniper Water,’ and is held in such high esteem as drinking water, that the inhabitants of that whole region send for it for many miles. I am assured also that there are many snakes in the swamp, and the only reason Byrd's surveyors did not encounter them is the early season at which the expedition was made.”

On March 1, 1728, Colonel Byrd thus alludes to “The Dismal.”

“They found all the grounds bordering upon it very full of sloughs. The trees that grew near it lookt very reverend with the long moss that hung dangling from their branches. Both cattle and horses eat this moss greedily in winter when other provender is scarce, tho it is apt to scowr them at first. In that moist soil, too, grew abundance of that kind of myrtle which bears the candle berries. There was, likewise, here and there, a gall-bush, which is a beautiful evergreen and may be cut into any shape. It derives its name from its berries turning water black, like the galls of an oak.”

On March 11, he says:

“It is hardly credible how little the Bordering Inhabitants were acquainted with this mighty swamp, notwithstanding they had lived their whole lives within smell of it. Yet, as great strangers as they were to it, they pretended to be very exact in their account of its Dimensions, and were positive it could not be above seven or eight miles wide, but knew

no more of the Matter than Star Gazers know of the 139 distance of the Fixt Stars. At the Same time they were simple enough to amuse our men with idle stories of the Lyons, Panthers and Alligators, they were like to encounter in that dreadful Place.

“In short, we saw plainly there was no Intelligence of this Terra Incognita to be got, but from our own Experience.

“March 14th. Altho there was no need of Example to influence Persons already so cheerful, yet to enter the People with better grace, the Author and two more of the Commissioners accompanied them half a mile into The Dismal. The skirts of it were thinly Planted with Dwarf Reeds and Gall-Bushes, but when we got into The Dismal itself, we found the Reeds grew there much taller and closer, and, to mend the matter were so interlaced with bamboo-briars that there was no scuffing through them without the help of Pioneers. At the same time, we found the Ground moist and trembling under our feet like a Quagmire, insomuch that it was an easy Matter to run a ten-foot-pole up to the Head in it, without exerting any uncommon strength to do it.

“Two of the men, whose Burthens were the least cumbersome, had orders to march before, with their Tomahawks, and clear the way, in order to make an Opening for the Surveyors. By their Assistance we made a Shift to push the line half a Mile in 3 hours, and then reacht a small piece of firm land, about 100 Yards wide, Standing above the rest like an island. Here the people were glad to lay down 140 their loads, and take a little refreshment, while the happy man, whose lot it was to carry the Tugg of Rum, began already, like Æsop's Bread Carriers, to find it grow a good deal lighter.

“However small the distance may seem to such as are used to travel at their Ease, yet our poor men, who were obliged to work with an unwieldy load at their Backs had reason to think it a long way; Especially in a Bogg where they had no firm footing, but every step made a deep Impression, which was instantly filled with water. At the same time they were laboring with their Hands to cut down the Reeds, which were Ten-feet high, their

legs were hampered with the Bryars. Besides, the Weather happened to be very warm, and the tallness of the Reeds kept off every friendly Breeze from coming to refresh them. And, indeed, it was a little provoking to hear the Wind whistling among the Branches of the White Cedars, which grew here and there amongst the Reeds, and at the same time not have the Comfort to feel the least Breath of it.

“In the meantime, the 3 commissioners returned out of the Dismal the same way they went in, and having joined their Brethren proceeded that night as far as Mr. Wilson's.

“This worthy Person lives within sight of the Dismal, in the Skirts whereof his Stocks range and Maintain themselves all the Winter, and yet he knew as little of it as he did of Terra Australis Incognita. He told us a Canterburry Tale of a North 141 Briton whose curiosity spurred him a long way into this great Desart, as he called it, near 20 years ago, but he having no compass, nor seeing the sun for several days together, wandered about till he was almost finisht; but at last he bethought himself of a secret his Countrymen make use of to Pilot themselves in a Dark Day.

“He took a fat louse out of his collar, and exposed it to the open day on a Piece of white paper, which he brought along with him for his Journal. The poor insect, having no eyelids, turned himself about till he found the Darkest Part of the Heavens, and so made the best of his way toward the North. By this Direction he steered himself safe out, and gave such a frightful account of the Monsters he saw, and the distresses he underwent, that no mortall since has been hardy enough to go upon the like dangerous Discovery.

“March 15th. The Surveyors pursued their work with all Diligence, but Still found the Soil of the Dismal so spongy that the Water oozed up into every footstep they took. To their sorrow, too, they found the Reeds and Bryars more firmly interwoven than they did the day before. But the greatest grievance was from large cypresses, which the Wind had blown down and heap'd upon one another. On the limbs of most of them grew sharp snags, Pointing every way like so many Pikes, that required much Pains and Caution to avoid.

“These trees being Evergreens and Shooting their 142 Large Tops Very high, are easily overset by every Gust of Wind, because there is no firm earth to Steddy their Roots. Thus many of them were laid prostrate to the great Encumbrance of the way. Such variety of Difficulties made the Business go on heavily, insomuch that, from morning till night, the line could advance no further than 1 mile, 31 poles. Never was Rum, that cordial of life, found more necessary than it was in this Dirty Place. It did not only recruit the People's Spirits, now almost jaded with Fatigue, but served to correct the Badness of the Water, and at the same time to resist the Malignity of the Air. Whenever the men wanted to drink, which was very often, they had nothing more to do but to make a Hole, and the water bubbled up in a Moment. But it was far from being either clear or well-tasted and had besides a Physical effect, from the Tincture it received from the Roots of the Shrubs and Trees that grew in the Neighborhood. March 16. The Soil continued soft and Miry, but fuller of trees, especially White Cedars. Many of these, too, were thrown down and piled in Heaps, high enough for a good Muscovite Fortification. The worst of it was, the Poor Fellows began now to be troubled with Fluxes, occasioned by Bad Water and moist lodgings, but chewing of Rhubarb kept that Malady within Bounds.

“Late that evening these poor men had the Fortune to come upon another Terra-firma which was 143 the Luckyer for them, because the Lower Ground by the rain that fell, was made a fitter lodging for Tadpoles than men.

“Since the Surveyors had entered the Dismal, they had laid eyes on no living Creature; neither Bird nor Beast, Insect nor Reptile came in View. Doubtless the eternal Shade that broods over this mighty Bog, and hinders the sunbeams from blessing the Ground, makes it an uncomfortable Habitation for anything that has life. Not so much as a Zealand Frog cou'd endure so Aguish a Situation.

“It had one Beauty, however, that delighted the Eye, tho at the expense of all the other senses: the Moisture of the Soil preserves a continual Verdure, and makes every plant an Evergreen, but at the same time the foul Damps ascend without ceasing, corrupt the Air,

and render it unfit for Respiration. Not even a Turkey Buzzard will venture to fly over it, no more than the Italian vultures will fly over the filthy lake Avernus, or the Birds in the Holy land over the Salt Sea; where Sodom and Gomorrah formerly stood.

“March 21st. The surveyors and their attendants began now in good Earnest to be alarmed with Apprehension of Famine, nor could they forbear looking with some sort of appetite upon a dog that had been the faithful companion of their travels.

“Their provisions were near exhausted. They had this Morning made the last Distribution, that so each might Husband his small Pittance as he 144 pleased. Now it was that the fresh Colored Young Man began to tremble every joint of him, having dreamed the night before that the Indians were about to Barbecue him over live coals.

“On their way they espied a Turkey Buzzard that flew prodigiously high to get above the Noisome Exhalations that ascend from that filthy place. This they were willing to understand as a good Omen, according to the Superstitions of the Ancients, who had great Faith in the Flight of Vultures. However, after all this tedious journey, they could yet discover no end to their toil, which made them very pensive, especially after they had eaten the last Morsel of their Provisions. But to their unspeakable comfort, when all was husht in the evening, they heard the cattle low, and the Dogs bark, very distinctly, which, to men in that distress, was more delightful music than Faustina or Farinelli cou'd have made.”

During the nine days that the men were lost in the Swamp Colonel Byrd and the other commissioners had fared very comfortably on the outer edge of it, not, however, without great anxiety for the fate of their surveyors.

On March 22, Colonel Byrd continues:

“In the midst of our concern, we were most agreeably surpriz'd, just after dinner, with the news that the Dismalites were all Safe. These blessed tidings were brought to us by Mr. Swan, the Caroline Surveyor, who came to us in a very tatter'd condition.

“After very Short Salutations we got about Him 145 as if He had been a Hottentot, and began to inquire into his Adventures. He gave us a detail of their uncomfortable Voyage thro the Dismal, and told us, particularly, they had pursued their Journey early that Morning, encouraged by the good Omen of seeing the Crows fly over their heads; that, after an Hour's march over very Rotten Ground, they, on a sudden, began to find themselves among tall Pines that grew in the water which in *many* Places was knee deep. This Pine Swamp, into which that of the Coropeak drain'd itself extended near a mile in Breadth; and tho it was exceedingly wet, yet it was much harder at Bottom than the rest of the swamp; that about ten in the Morning, they recovered firm land, which they embraced with as much Pleasure as Shipwrecked Wretches do the Shoar.

“By the Description the Surveyors gave of the Dismal, we were convinced that nothing but the exceeding dry season we had been blessed with cou'd have made the passing of it practicable. It is the source of no less than five several Rivers which discharge themselves Southward into Albermarle Sound, and of two that run northerly into Virginia. From thence 'tis easy to imagine that the soil must be thoroughly Soakt with Water, or else there must be plentiful stores of it under Ground; to supply so many rivers; especially since there is no lake, or any considerable Body of that element to be seen on the Surface. The Rivers that head in it from Virginia are the South Branch of Nansemond, and the West 146 Branch of Elizabeth; and those from Carolina are Northwest River, North River, Pasquetauk, Little River and Pequimons.”

“We are not yet acquainted with the precise extent of the Dismal, the whole having never been surveyed; but it may be computed at a medium to be about thirty Miles long, and ten miles broad, tho where the line crost it, 'twas compleatly fifteen miles wide. But it seems to grow Narrower toward the North, or at least does so in many Places. The Exhalations

that continually rise from the vast Body of mire and Nastiness infect the Air for many Miles round, and render it very unwholesome for the Bordering Inhabitants. It makes them liable to Agues, Pleurisys, and many other Distempers that kill abundance of People and make the rest look no better than ghosts. It wou'd require a great Sum of Money to drain it but the Publick Treasure cou'd not be better bestowed than to preserve the Lives of his Majesty's Liege People, and at the same time render so great a Tract of Swamp very Profitable, besides the advantage of making a Channel to transport by water-carriage goods from Albermarle Sound into Nansemond and Elizabeth Rivers, in Virginia."

John Boyle O'Reilly, after making a study of the swamp and devoting a week to exploring Lake Drummond in his canoe, came to the conclusion that the 147 swamp ought to be drained and took up the matter with all the fervor of his ardent nature. *At* the time that he wrote, but little study had been given to the other side of the question. In presenting a portion of his delightful description of the Dismal Swamp through the permission of his executor, I shall omit controversial matter and confine myself to extracts from his charmingly poetical essay on what he and his companion, Mr. Edward A. Moseley, actually saw. His paper on the region was incorporated in his valuable work "Athletics and Manly Sports," published by the Pilot Publishing Company of Boston. The excerpts given here are from Mr. O'Reilly's graphic and poetical description of this remarkable region.

"The Dismal Swamp is one of the celebrated features of the American continent. Its name is almost as familiar as Niagara or the Rocky Mountains. Almost in the center lies Lake Drummond. Its reputation is that of a morass of forbidding and appalling gloom, a region impenetrable to the search of student or hunter; the fecund bed of fever and malaria, infested with deadly serpents and wild beasts; the old-time refuge of fugitive slaves. It is supposed by the outer world, and even by those who reside on its borders, to be a hopeless wilderness, an incurable ulcer on the earth's surface, a place that would have been long ago forgotten but for its shadowy romance,—for its 148 depths were once

enlightened, by the undying song of a famous poet. Some of this evil character is true, but most of it is untrue, and much of the slander has not been accidental, but deliberate.

“It is true that the hunted slave often heard the baying of the bloodhounds as he crouched in the cane brake of the Dismal Swamp, or plunged into its central lake to break the trail, and true also that its hundreds of miles of waterlogged forest is infested with repulsive and deadly creatures, reptile and beast, bear, panther, wild cat and snake; but it is not true that the Dismal Swamp is an irreclaimable wilderness, the pestilent source of miasma and malaria.

“The Dismal Swamp is an agony of perverted nature. It is Andromeda, not waiting for the monster, but already in his grasp, broken and silent under the itolerable embrace.”

“The Lake of the Dismal Swamp is the very eye of material anguish. Its circle of silvery beach is flooded and hidden, and still the pent-up water, vainly beseeching an outlet, is raised and driven in unnatural enmity to the roots of the tall juniper, cypress, and gum trees, that completely surround its shore. The waves that should murmur and break on a strand of incomparable brilliancy, are pushed beyond their proper limits, and compelled to soften and sap the productive earth; to wash bare and white the sinews of the friendly trees, and inundate a wide region of extraordinary fertility. The bleached roots of the 149 doomed trees seem to shudder and shrink from the weltering death. There is an evident bending upward of the overtaken roots to escape suffocation. The shores of the lake are like a scene from the ‘Inferno.’ Matted, twisted, and broken, the roots, like living things in danger, arch themselves out of the dark flood, pitifully striving to hold aloft their noble stems and branches. The water of the lake, dark almost as blood, from the surface flow of juniper sap and other vegetable matter, is forced from six to ten feet above its natural level, and driven by winds hither to this bank to-day and thither to-morrow, washing every vestige of earth from the helpless life-givers, till its whole circumference is a woeful network of gnarled trunks and intertwined fibers, bleached and dry as the bones of a skeleton, and sheltering no life, but that of the blue lizard and red-throated moccasin.

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“These bare roots and blasted stumps circle the water like a hideous crown, till the lake becomes a realization of the Medusa. Here, far from the voices of mankind, the Gorgon stares at heaven, but sees with introverted eye only the writhing horror of her own brow; hears only the hiss, and shrinks from the kiss of her serpent locks, gazing into no living eyes but those of her own damnable strands.

“The Lake of the Dismal Swamp is the well of the Swamp's desolation. The swamp is not from itself, but from the well.

“The region of the Dismal Swamp was intended 150 by nature to be a pleasure ground, a health resort, and a game preserve for the eastern side of the continent.

“The swamp itself is, probably, the healthiest spot in America. Its delicious juniper water prevents malaria more effectually and perfectly than the famed eucalyptus of Australia. The flying game of the continent centers in this region, and the lake in winter is the best shooting ground in the country.

“Ponder on this marvelous fact: the lake of the Dismal Swamp is situated on the side, and almost on the top of a hill, beside a tidal river, and yet it creates by overflow all around it for about one thousand square miles, one of the densest and darkest morasses on the surface of the earth.

“In 1763, George Washington surveyed the Dismal Swamp, and discovered that the western side was much higher than the eastern, and that rivers ran out of the swamp, and not into it. He then wrote that the swamp was ‘neither a plain nor a hollow, but a hillside.’

“In the month of May, 1888, two sunburned white men in cedar canoes entered the dark and narrow channel, called the Feeder, that pierces the very heart of the swamp, and supplies the great canal with water from Lake Drummond, or the ‘Lake of the Dismal Swamp.’ The men in the canoes were Mr. Edward A. Moseley and the writer of this article.

“These were almost the first canoes, except the ‘white canoe’ of the poet, that ever paddled on the 151 breast of the dusky lake since the disappearance of the Indian hunters a century ago.

“While we were in the main canal we found the banks high, especially on the western side, where the diggings and dredgings of the channel have been heaped for a century. On this side, behind the bank, lay unbroken leagues of swamp, crowded with dense timber and cane-brake jungle, the surface of the land or mire being considerably lower than the surface of the canal. On the east side ran the road, and beyond this, long stretches of level country, formerly part of the Dismal Swamp, but now more or less cleared, with here and there a farm of astonishing superiority, and at long intervals a straggling village, usually connected with a sawmill for juniper and cypress.

“The land east of the canal has been cleared, because it has been drained into the sea. The fall is to the east. But all the land west of the canal is still unrelieved and ‘dismal’ swamp.

“But I have outstripped the canoes. Let me begin at the beginning, and tell this story of a delightful summer outing.

“Go back again to Norfolk with me, and try to forget that you have been inside the gates of this brown-water canal of the Dismal Swamp.

“It is seven o'clock in the morning, and we two are in the market of Norfolk buying bacon, salt pork, hard bread, cheese, a ham, an alcohol stove, and all the necessaries for a few weeks' sojourn in the wilderness.

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“At ten o'clock we are on board a tug to take us to the first lock on the Dismal Swamp Canal.

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“We improve the waiting (of the tug) by arranging our baggage, oiling gun and rifle, fixing hooks and lines, and otherwise giving a last touch to the arrangements.

“At one o'clock the tug started with us for the lock. There was a queer nervousness about us as we neared the place, caused by our complete ignorance of what the swamp was like.

“Presently one of the hands on the tug pointed to the water; the river had grown dark like the stream from a dye-works. ‘See,’ he said, ‘that is the juniper water of the Dismal Swamp.’

“It was singular that neither the captain nor his men could tell anything about the swamp. Their knowledge ended at the lock. This is characteristic of the whole neighboring population. Richmond knows as little about the swamp as Boston; even Norfolk and Suffolk know little more.

“‘All I know,’ said the captain, ‘is that there are lots of snakes in there.’

“‘And bears,’ says another.

“‘And panthers,’ says a third, and so on, and so on, while each one gave a friendly hand to launch the canoes as we closed to a wharf near the lock, where about thirty colored men were loading a schooner with lumber and bundled shingles of juniper and cypress.

“‘If I were going in there, I'd keep Smith-Wesson 153 handy,’ said the second hand on the tug, as we touched the shore. Before we could ask the meaning of the unpleasant hint (which we found to be a libel on the swamp), the sturdy little steamer had backed out, and was whistling ‘Good-by.’

“Then we entered the first lock of the Dismal Swamp Canal, directly from the tide-water of the Elizabeth River. A word about the history of the canal. A company for the cutting of the

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Dismal Swamp Canal was chartered by the States of Virginia and North Carolina, in 1787, and both States subscribed generously to the stock. The United States Congress also became a large stockholder. The names of George Washington and Patrick Henry were among the first subscribers for the stock; though this canal for commerce must not be confounded with an earlier system of canals or ditches, devised by Washington himself for the purpose of reclaiming the swamp by lightering the timber to the frontier. These canals still exist; but the charter of the commercial canal gave it absolute right over the waters of the lake and all other canals in the swamp. It was not opened till 1822, in which year the first vessel passed through to Norfolk from the Albemarle Sound. It was completed in 1828.

“The cost of cutting the canal and its tributaries was about twelve hundred thousand dollars, and it is estimated that the expense of the earlier canals, also largely from public money, was several hundred thousand dollars more.

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“The canal is forty feet wide, chartered to be eight feet deep, fresh water, the color of dark brandy or strong breakfast tea (the color caused by the juniper sap and other vegetable qualities), but clear and palatable, and singularly wholesome. The banks, where we could see the cutting under the foliage, were composed of fine yellow sand mixed with broken shells. A profusion of wild-rose bushes, myrtle, sweet bay, flowering laurel, white blackberry blossoms, and honeysuckle leaned over the water and made a most lovely border.

“The afternoon was pleasant, with a cool wind in our favor, and, though Mr. Moseley had bailing enough to do, we reached Roper's enormous sawmill and factory, at Deep Creek, in about an hour.

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“Let me here explain that Lake Drummond is the center of the swamp's organism, acting precisely like a heart. Except the Dismal Swamp Canal which runs along the border, all the roads, canals, and ditches that pierce the swamp, radiate from the lake like from a hub.

“The swamp has only one natural feature—the lake. All the rest is simply swamp. The canals and roads are accidents.

“Whoever would know the Dismal Swamp must study it from the lake, not from the exterior. This is the reason that even those living in its neighborhood know so little about it. Their knowledge is local, not consitutional.

“A ‘gum road’ is a road formed by trunks of trees 155 about eight feet long, laid close together, and bearing two rude wooden rails. On these run low mule wagons or trucks, loaded with logs cut in the interior. The mule goes securely on the ‘gum road,’ and the negro driver usually walks ahead on one of the broad rails.

“There was no one at Roper's sawmill who could give us any information, so we paddled on to the village of Deep Creek, before reaching which we passed through another lock. Here the Dismal Swamp proper may be said to begin. At this lock we were again raised several feet, so that we were now, although only a few miles from tidal-water, probably sixteen feet above the sea level.

“The whole southern coast is margined by swamp lands; but the Dismal Swamp is not of them. It is high land instead of low land; its water is fresh, instead of salt or brackish. Among swamps it is an abnormality. It leans over the sea, and yet contains its own moisture like a bowl. Indeed, the Dismal Swamp is a great bowl, forty miles long, and ten to twenty miles wide, and, strange to say, with its highest water in the center. The sides of the bowl are miles of fallen and undecaying trees, fixed in a mortar of melted leaves and mold. Deep in the soft bosom of the swamp are countless millions of feet of precious

timber that has lain there, the immense trunks crossing each other like tumbled matches, ‘since the beginning of the world,’ as a juniper cutter said.

“Moseley's canoe still leaking, we hired a team from 156 ‘Mr.’ Johnson of Deep Creek, to carry the baggage to Captain Wallace's house, and we started to paddle up the canal.

“As the evening darkened, with a clear sky overhead, and a red glow from the west, reaching over the trees, the effect was almost oppressively beautiful. No other tree darkens in evening silhouette so impressively as the two queen trees of the Dismal Swamp, the juniper and cypress. With the low sun behind them, the clear-cut delicacy of their foliage reminds one of the exquisite fineness of dried sea mosses on a tinted page. But when the sun has gone down, and the sky is still flushed with its glory, the cypress takes on a mystery of dark and refined beauty that is all its own. It rises still blacker than the dark underwood, the tallest among the trees, lonely, like a plume. It is not heavy or hearse-like, but thin, fibrous, the twilight showing through its delicate branches, and tracing every exquisite needle of its leafage on the air. It seems to be blacker than the coming night; blacker far in its fine filaments than the clustered laurel at its feet. The darkness and delicacy of the cypress are its genius. It does not oppress, it thrills. In the twilight it is the very plume of death, but of a death uncommon. A yew or a willow is a sign of mourning; but a cypress in the evening is a symbol of woe.

“But with the decline of the lovely day came such a jubilant chorus of sweet voices. Never have we heard, except in the air of dreamland, such a concert 157 of delicious bird music. In number and variety the singers were multiplied beyond conception. Far as we could see the canal we knew that the air was vibrant with this harmony. The thought of such unbroken melody following the eye into the remote distance was a more delightful music in itself than that which was ravishing the senses. Here the mocking-bird ceased to mock, and poured out its own ecstatic soul. The catbird, discordant no longer, shot its clear joy through the great harmony, and the wren and swamp canary twined their notes like threads of gossamer through the warp and woof of this marvelous tapestry of sound.

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“We let the evening fall on us unresistingly, to drink in the sweet thing that was around us. We were miles from our destination, but we could not settle to mere traveling till this incredible vesper song was done. We sat silent, absorbed, witnessing ‘the deathbed of a day, how beautiful.’

“After an early breakfast at Captain Wallace's farm we started up the canal, intending to reach the Feeder early in the forenoon, and, if possible, arrive at the lake about noon. Still the leaky canoe bothered us; but while we were considering how to make her carry her load, a handsome young farmer, Mr. R. E. B. Stuart, courteously offered us his boat and man to take our baggage to the Feeder lock, near the lake. In a few minutes the boat started ahead of us.

“The condition of the Feeder was a shocking revelation. There was no raised bank here, as in the main 158 canal. For miles of its length the water flowed freely over the banks into the swamp, creating a morass of dreadful appearance. No living thing could there find footing. Even birds were rarely seen, although we saw a few of beautiful plumage, one of which is known to the negroes of the swamp as the red bird. It resembled a flame in the brilliance of its coloring, as it passed through the shaded light of the swamp.

“In the Feeder we met several lighters, heavily piled with juniper logs, on their way from the lake to the sawmill. These lighters had each two men, colored, who poled them from the banks. At times, when the sides of the Feeder will permit, they walk on a line of logs laid along the mud bank, pushing the lighter with their poles resting against the breast.

“Our passage up the Feeder was against a strong current. It was a steady and monotonous paddle through the dim light, the cane brake and the boughs reaching over our heads. The air had a dense warmth as though we were in a closed room. Outside on the canal, there was a strong breeze with a decided chill in it; here, we were stifled as if in an oven. And yet, up to this time we had not seen a mosquito in the swamp; and as

for snakes and other wild creatures, we had almost made up our minds that they were a tradition or a popular romance.

“We kept laboriously paddling against the strong current, for the lock ahead, only a quarter of a mile from the lake, was this day letting pass an unusual volume of water. Every stroke of the paddle now 159 sent us deeper and deeper into the heart of the swamp. Suddenly, Moseley, who was ahead, stopped paddling and peered through the matted underbrush.

“‘What is it?’ I asked.

“‘A cow and a calf. What can they be doing here in the middle of the swamp?’

“There they were, sure enough; a red and white pair. They heard our voices, stopped chewing, stared a moment, then turned and picked their way into the jungle.

“A few minutes later the lock came in sight, and we saw two men waving their hats. One was the man in Mr. Stuart's boat with our traps, and the other was ‘Abeham’ (not Abraham), who was to be our guide, philosopher, and friend on the lake.

“‘What are that cow and calf doing in the swamp?’ was our first question.

“‘Wild cattle, sah,’ said Abeham.

“‘Are there wild cattle in the swamp?’

“‘Yes, hund'eds and hund'eds of wild cattle; I saw lots of 'em dis mawnin'. Yo' ought to have shot dat calf; we'll want him to-morrow.’

“This lock at the very lip of the lake keeps the water back to another height of several feet, so that lock after lock, from first to last, had backed up the lake to the height of almost twenty-three feet above tide-water.

“Never can we forget the view that met our eyes as we were raised to that last level, and looked along the canal to the lake.

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“The lock house and the whole Feeder were completely overhung with tall trees. So close was their interlacing over the canal that the view to the lake was like looking through the barrel of a gun. The air along the dark and narrow sheet was actually green from the light sifting through the foliage. We were in the shadow; it was all shadow to the end, but the end of the view glittered like an immense diamond.

“A ball of glorious and unshaded brilliancy lay at the end of the Feeder. A ‘talisman's glory’ it was, set on the low water and framed in the dense cypress.

“‘What is that?’ we asked after a long look of bewildered pleasure.

“‘Dat's de openin’ to de lake,' said Abeham.

“We sat there for an hour. We ate our dinner and smoked a cigar; and the wonder lessened as the strange glory grew. The radiance of the diamond became subdued till it had taken the form of a perfect arch, with its perfect reflection in the water.

“We were looking along a dark, straight stream, shaded over like the low arch of a bridge, until the gun barrel simile was the most likely, and, at the end of the muzzle, the vision was carried across three miles of open and smooth water flashing to the sun.

“Then we started down the gun barrel toward the lovely bridge, the perfection of which remained unbroken to the last. Here was no effort of landscape art, but the living hand of nature completing its own picture and putting all art as gently out of question as the mountain does the mole.

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“A weirdly beautiful view opened on us as our canoes shot under the outer leaves of the Feeder's bridge, and we floated at last within the marvelous ring of the lake of the Dismal Swamp.

“Vividly came to our minds the picture in Moore's touching ballad.

“Here, we thought, is the very scene, water, wood, and sky, that the poet saw generations ago. These trees growing out of the dark flood; this weeping moss hanging from the sad queenliness of the elegant cypress; these ‘deadly vines’ with their purple trumpet flowers that poison the very water into which they pour their tears; these ‘beds of reed’ and ‘tangled juniper’; these white roots round the border of the lake, where glide and coil ‘the copper snake’ and the fearful red-bellied moccasin.

“Our camp lay on the northwest corner of the lake, three miles from the Feeder's mouth. At the start we struck out to the middle of the lake before turning north, so that we took in at first glance the whole wonderful view. For myself, I longed to lay down my paddle and sit there motionless until the sun sank and the moon rose, for a dream and fascination that had drawn me from childhood was now fulfilled and completed. Only the lake of my fancy was much smaller and gloomier than the true lake.

“There is no other sheet of water like this anywhere. No other so far removed from the turbulence of life, so defamed, while so beautiful. It fills one with pity and wonder—the utter silence and loneliness of 162 it. It is a dead sea, but neither bitter nor barren.

“I could not help the feeling, that increased as time passed, that this pure eye of water, ringed by one distinct line of dark trees, no farther horizon visible, was not on a plain, but on a high mountain. Later on, as we sailed around the borders of the lake, another delusive thought persisted in coming. It always seemed that the wooded shore rose abruptly thirty yards or so back from the water, and that I verily could see the uplifting of

the trees and underbrush. Probably because it was unnatural that the shore should be just as low or lower than the water surface, the senses refused to accept it as true.

“The first deep impression made on me by the lake was its size. I had expected to see a sheet not a tenth part as large, and gloomy with the shadows of its tall, overhanging trees. Instead, from the center the trees were a low, dark border on the far horizon.

“From the center, the lake is the very ideal of loneliness and stillness, strangely emphasized by the solitary wide-winged hawk, tipping on his high circle. No smaller bird can be seen at this distance in the trees on the shore—though birds are there, and in rich variety.

“But crossing the lake that first day we saw only one bird, a hawk of great size. The water was deliciously cool in the center, where the average depth is about fifteen feet. Again and again, we drank the sweet draught. Looking into it, no mirror could 163 be more perfect in reflection. The flash of the paddies was brown, not crystal. On a day when the water broke (and we crossed the lake one day before the rush of a gale), the brown brandy-light through the lifting waves and the warm ruddiness of the breakers were singularly beautiful.

“The lake is full of fish of many and excellent kinds, though it has never been fished in the deeper water. The ‘swampers,’ who live on the borders, never fish beyond the line of stumps, which are at farthest a hundred yards from the shore, so that the fish of the lake are not at all completely known. The garfish, because he jumps, has been seen sometimes eight feet long, but no other fish is seen in the deep water. You cannot see one inch into the lake; it is like looking into a bowl of ink. This makes it dangerous for light boating, for the snags are numerous, and though they may not be a nail's breadth under water, they are quite invisible.

“The lake itself was discovered by a Scotchman named Drummond, after whom it was named.

“George Washington, in 1763, in his twenty-first year, made a complete survey of the Dismal Swamp, with profound results. Throughout his life the secrets of nature he had there discovered were never forgotten; and years afterwards, when the Revolutionary War was over, and he was ‘the father of his country,’ he purchased the swamp, and organized the Dismal Swamp Land Company, which still exists and continues its ownership.

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“Washington himself surveyed the swamp for the route of his canals. His first cutting, running from the northwest corner of the lake in a westerly direction, ended at what is called the Reed Farm, on the Edenton road, seven miles from Suffolk. It is still called ‘Washington's Ditch.’ It has for many years been abandoned as a means of travel, a more direct route—the Jericho Canal—having been made at a later date. The Jericho Canal leaves the lake at the same lock as ‘Washington's Ditch,’ and ends within two miles of Suffolk, running into the Nansemond River.

“I paddled up both these canals from the lake, and more oppressive surroundings it is hard to conceive. The Jericho Canal is ten miles long and eighteen feet wide, but the encroaching bamboo jungle reduces this width by over two feet on each side. The dense canes rise at least fifteen feet high on both banks, so that it is like canoeing in an unroofed sewer. To enliven the passage, the moccasins, on sunny days, climb to the tops of the bamboo canes, and are seen constantly dropping into the water. It is a common thing to have them drop into the open dugout of the ‘swamper,’ out of which they wriggle without delay. But the thought of a five-foot venomous snake dropping into a fourteen-foot canoe, with decks forward and aft, under which he would be sure to dart, and out of which there was no escape except by returning to the center of the boat, was a dismal imagining. 165 To make sure of no such visitor, I kept firing now and then into the canes ahead.

“The water in the Jericho Canal runs into the lake; but at one-third its length the stream turns and runs the other way, emptying into the Nansemond River.

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“The condition of the wholly abandoned ‘Washington's Ditch’ is even more forbidding than that of the Jericho Canal. The heavy trees are crowding its banks and leaning into it; the bamboos meet across it for long distances. It is, I think, the most somber and evil-looking waterway on the earth, and yet no foot of it but is beautiful. The water moves slowly toward the lake (any movement is a relief in the gloom and silence, for even the birds have deserted the place), but after a short distance, as in the Jericho Canal, the flow changes and goes outward.

“Washington had undoubtedly discovered the deepest secret of the Dismal Swamp, and appreciated its importance. He had read, most probably, the only description of the swamp in existence in his time, in a manuscript journal kept by Col. William Byrd of Westover (on the borders of the swamp), a man of great intelligence, who had surveyed the Dismal Swamp in 1725, at the request of the Governor of Virginia. Colonel Byrd's manuscript is to be seen in the National Library at Washington. After his survey, he reported to the Governor of Virginia that the Dismal could be drained and reclaimed, and a petition was sent to George III, asking that a company 166 be formed for that purpose, the company agreeing in advance to bear all the expenses, to pay themselves by the ownership of the reclaimed land, which was to remain untaxed for fifty years; and they bound themselves also to complete the work in ten years.

“One hundred and sixty-seven years have passed since then. King George's answer has not yet been received.

“Colonel Byrd says he succeeded at length in reaching the North Carolina Side of the swamp, and of course he is to be believed. But he must have skirted the eastern border all the way, for he missed the lake, which was not discovered until another quarter of a century had passed.

“Washington, in 1763, in his own words, entered the Dismal Swamp, and ‘encompassed the whole.’ He camped on the east side of the lake, and unquestionably considered the

problem of its formation, for he was astonished, and he astonished others by declaring that all the rivers in the swamp flowed out instead of into it.

"'The Dismal Swamp,' wrote Washington, 'is neither a hollow nor a plain, but a hillside.' He had discovered, what measurement has since shown, that the lake was twenty-three feet higher than the sea.

"The bottom of the lake is composed almost wholly of fine white sand, and the temperature varies greatly in parts. In our long rubber boots we waded in the shallow water near the shore in several places, and found this fine sand bottom.

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"If I were sick to-morrow of malaria contracted on some New England river, I should go at once to the Dismal Swamp to be cured. Depend on it, the tree that can kill malaria in such a morass can drive it out of the human blood.

"One day Moseley was out on the lake fishing, and I was paddling quietly under the trees on the bank, hoping to shoot a red-bird or a crowned thrush for a specimen. I heard Moseley hail me, and answered, but then he went on in a very queer way talking with some one in the swamp beyond me. At last I went out to him and found that he had discovered an echo of wonderful clearness, and which was otherwise interesting. Near the shore I had not heard it, but a quarter of a mile out it was startlingly distinct.

"The sound was quite unlike the hard resonance thrown back from cliff, mountain or cave. It smacked of the swamp in a manner hard to describe. The repetition was largely magnified, though it seemed to be thrown to a distance, and to come from a great height, as if it had bounded up from the wide field of the swamp. The sound had an elastic click about it, like the remote stroke of a woodman's ax. It was the echo from a wood, unmistakably, and not from a wall.

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“Strange to say, the best word to throw to an echo is its own name. It loves to fling it back unclipped and sudden. Divide the syllables, stopping at the ‘ech,’ and it seems to wait impatiently for the ‘o.’ We had 168 a long conversation with it, and wondered whether it resided in the dense cane brake and higher foliage that lined the waterfront, or rebounded upward like a boy's ball that had fallen on the vast concavity of the tree tops.

“We spent the days exploring lake and swamp, returning to camp tired at night, but repaid by our experience. We were seeing the lake and swamp as no one can ever see them without such boats as ours. A heavy boat, with oars, cannot pass through the ditches and canals, nor even coast the lake inside the line of stumps. The negro ‘dugout’ is available for lake and canal, but it is heavy and slow, and it cannot face the lake in rough water and high wind. The birch-bark canoe would get snagged at every length. The only safe and pleasant boat for the swamp is the cedar canoe, and an open one is better than a decked one, to let the moccasins wriggle out if they happen to fall in while you are passing through the narrow canals.

“During our passage round the lake we came to very many old and new ‘gum roads’ running into the swamp. We followed these until we saw the nature of each. Some had been deserted apparently scores of years ago, and it was a sorry sight to see the effect of the ruthless timber-cutting which is going on to-day as it was fifty or one hundred years ago. No intelligent forestry has ever been applied to the swamp; the selection of the trees has been wholly left to ignorant men. Where whole groves of juniper or cypress 169 were cut down, the cleared land was left to grow up in jungle, and the jungle that follows this cutting is an impenetrable cane brake, through which an elephant could not force his way for miles.

“The beauty and profusion of the vegetation seen from these ‘gum roads’ is indescribable. The greens of the underwood are the intensest hues of nature; the ferns dripping with moisture, the yellow jessamine climbing the great trees, the familiar Virginia creeper rioting in its leaps and lovely hangings. Again and again, not knowing, we were tempted to gather

the attractive trumpets of the poisonous oakvine, that is so virulent that to bathe in water in which it hangs will blister and corrupt the flesh. This is Moore's ‘deadly vine,’ that “doth weep Its venomous tear, and nightly steep The flesh with blistering dew.”

“‘There are two things I should like to know,’ said Moseley, during our last day on the lake, ‘and one is what that fellow in the Norfolk tug meant by advising us to keep our pistols handy? Surely there could be no men more good-natured and lawful than these poor fellows who work in the swamp.’

“This was emphatically true. Considering the wild life that the ‘swampers’ lead, they are the most harmless, amiable, and, I should say, innocent men I have ever met. Their conversation with us, and among themselves was about as light, cheerful, 170 and curious as that of children. They carry no weapons; they are sober, play-loving, and obliging. Only on one colored man in the swamp did we see anything like a weapon, and that was a razor, ostentatiously carried in his waistcoat pocket by a jaunty mulatto; but he had been a great traveler, he said, and he had only come into the swamp to see some friend among the juniper-cutters, though perhaps he had some other reason for a little retirement from society. The swamp is a fine place for a retreat.

“‘What is the other thing you are in doubt about?’ I asked Moseley.

“‘The wild cattle. We have seen only that red and white cow and calf, though they say they are numerous. I can't believe that that tame-looking cow was wild.’

“‘But what business would a tame cow have in the depths of the swamp, and how could she get home if she had a home to go to?’

“He admitted that it was hard to find a domestic reason for the cow being in the swamp, but still he doubted. We were passing at the time through a narrow and dark waterway, where the sheets of deep water under the trees lay like black glass. We came to a dry bank in the morass, and, standing there, quietly and proudly looking at us as we

approached was a red bull about three years old. We stopped paddling and returned the stare. He stood beside our only passage, a narrow one. Abeham was behind, 171 and he shouted, ‘Look out, dere; dat wild bull is dang'ous.’

“We shouted at him, but he paid no heed. He was a superb creature, dark red all over, round-headed and very small. We broke branches and waved them and shouted, at a distance from him of about twenty yards. Not an eye winked, but his tail gave one or two quiet waves from side to side. Abeham wanted us to load a rifle, and kill him; but this would be wanton, as we were to leave the swamp the next day. Still we must pass, and he would not move. He paid no attention to a gun pointed at him. The poor fellow was only half wild, one could not help thinking; the hereditary taint of human association was in his blood. Probably his grandfather had fed in a fenced field, and had submitted to be ‘driven home’ by a bare-footed boy.

“At last a shot fired into the cane brake close to him gave him a shock. He looked at the canes where the small shot rushed, and then turned and trotted into the swamp.

“That night we decided to leave the lake next day, passing through the Feeder and keeping along the main canal until we reached the Pasquotank River in North Carolina.

“It rained in torrents in the early part of the night, and then cleared up, and the full moon shone on the lake. It was a scene of marvelous beauty, which color alone, not words, could reproduce. The lake was smooth, and incredibly black, the water retaining 172 absolutely no light, and only appearing to be liquid by the surface shining. The moon's reflection, on the contrary, was whiter than it would be on common water, and it crossed the lake like the avenue to a king's palace.

“It was five o'clock in the morning, and the eastern sky was paling the moon, when we stood on the edge of the lake, with ‘A health to thee, Tom Moore,’ and then we broke camp.

“As our canoes shot out on the lake and we looked back on the camp, we knew that the days and nights spent there could never be forgotten.

“We crossed the lake in the teeth of a stiff breeze that made the beautiful brown waves leap at us in play, as if to stay our going. It was still early morning when we reached the mouth of the Feeder, and took our last look at the lake.

“This last look at the lake, between the trees, showed us a tall cypress with immense roots standing up in the deep water, like a suffering mythological tree, condemned and metamorphosed for offending the gods.”

An interesting description of a trip to the swamp appeared in the September number of *Harper's Magazine* in 1856. The writer—who was Mr. Strother of Winchester, Virginia—under the pseudonym of “Porte Crayon” made illustrations of the salient features of his explorations, among them being the sketch of a ferocious looking runaway slave

House in Main Street

173 whom he encountered in the swamp. Excerpts from this interesting narrative are herewith given:

“March 18th. In Norfolk I was advised to enter the Swamp from Suffolk, as the distance from that place to Lake Drummond, by the Land Company's Canal, is considerably less than by the route from Norfolk. I consequently took the cars on the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad, and reached here about haft-past eight this morning. Suffolk, the county seat of Nansemond, is one of the oldest towns in the state. It is situated on the Nansemond River and contains twelve or thirteen hundred inhabitants, and except the loss of its commercial importance, it stands pretty much where it did before the Revolutionary War. I expected to have found a very old, decayed, desolate looking village, such as you may find elsewhere in Virginia, but was agreeably disappointed. With few exceptions the houses are of wood, painted white, each standing by itself and surrounded with shrubbery, flowers,

and trees. Its single street, about three-quarters of a mile in length, is shaded on either side by fine rows of trees, while the dwellings, without any pretensions to architectural elegance, have a neat, rural air, quite captivating to one wearied of towns and cities. On stepping from the cars I was accosted by an amiable looking mulatto boy, who took my knapsack out of my hand and warmingly recommended the Central Hotel to my favorable consideration. The Central was an old-fashioned wooden building, which had evidently at one time been a private 174 residence and tastefully improved. Two gigantic box-trees stood within a paled inclosure, one on either side of the principal entrance, while the old Virginia outside chimneys were covered to the tops with ivy. To be sure the Venetians had lost half their slats, and some of them hung awry, while the white and green paint had become dingy and faded, but I must confess I was rather taken with the air of decayed respectability which the establishment wore from this circumstance. I scarcely know why I have taken the pains to describe this old house so minutely, as it has no historic associations that I know of, nor is it to be the theater of any tragedy, love plot or ghostly apparition. But M'Guire is one of the most obliging of hosts, and I spent two weeks there very pleasantly eating fish and oysters. Moreover, its appearance pleased my fancy, and is characteristic of the Southern country. Through the kind offices of some friends I completed my arrangements to visit the Swamp on the following morning. A basket of provisions, a roll of blankets, and a buffalo robe for bedding, were put upon mine host's buggy wagon, and about ten o'clock A. M., on the 19th, we mounted in person and drove off to the canal, two miles distant. Here I found a large covered barge and two stout negroes at my service. My baggage was quickly transferred from the buggy to the boat. Each negro had a covered tin bucket containing his day's provision, but on ascertaining that I contemplated staying several days, a large iron kettle and a 175 couple of skillets or, as they are here called, spiders, were put into the barge. The boatmen each took hold of a long pole, and by the aid of a peg and a withe rigged it horizontally, one to the bow and the other to the stern of the boat, so that the ends projected over the towpath. They then bore their breats upon the poles, and, with one foot advanced, stood motionless, with eyes fixed upon me as if waiting a signal. ‘Forward.’ The barge went rippling through

the water. I waved adieu to my friends at the bridge, and without more ceremony took my stand upon the bow of the boat, from whence my straining eyes strove to follow an excited fancy onward to the shores of the dusky lake.

“The lake of the Dismal Swamp has haunted my imagination from my earliest recollection, owing, probably, to the fact that the exquisite ballad of Moore's was my lullaby in infancy, and even now, when in sad and dreamy mood, that old wailing melody invariably recurs to me as it was sung over my cradle, soothing the real with the wilder sorrow of the poet's fancy.

“Before I was aware of it I was in the Swamp.

“Lofty trees threw their arching limbs over the canal, clothed to their tops with a gauze-like drapery of tangled vines, walls of matted reeds closed up the view on either side, while thickets of myrtle, green briar, bay, and juniper, hung over the black, narrow canal, until the boat could hardly find a passage between.

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“The sky was obscured with leaden colored clouds, and all nature was silent, monotonous, deathlike. The surface of the canal was glassy smooth, and reflected the towering trees, the festooned vines, and pendant moss, with the clearness of a mirror. Before and behind the perspective lines ran to a point. The low whispering ripple of the water, and the sullen tramp, tramp, tramp, of the bargeman, did not disturb the stillness, but made it seem all the more dreary, like the ticking of an old clock in a deserted house at midnight. I was alone, utterly alone. My men were voiceless as the mutes of an Eastern despot. With the eternal tramp, tramp, tramp, they might have been ghouls, or cunningly-devised machines, set in motion by some malignant sorcerer, to bear me away living into a region of stagnation and death. Occasional glimpses through the thicket showed on either side extensive pools of black, slimy water, from which rose the broad-based cypress, and grouped around those strange contorted roots, called knees, gnarled and knotted like stalagmites in a cave.

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There upon a decayed log, lay a coiled dead snake, dragged untimely from his winter retreat by a hungry otter. As we passed, I heard a rushing of wings above us, and saw a lazy, loathsome buzzard, seared from his perch and sailing away above the tree tops. The tow-path now was nothing more than a line of juniper logs, laid along the bank among the grass and reeds. The overarching gums had given place to a thick grove of pointed juniper trunks, deadened 177 by a recent fire. This region bore some resemblance to the crowded docks of a maritime town. The horizontally projecting limbs were the booms and yards, while the hanging vines served as cordage. Then the gums and cypresses reappeared, the same beds of reeds, evergreens, and briars, in endless perspective. We were entering on the fourth hour.

“Monotony is wearisome, dreary, solemn, terrible. Tramp, tramp, tramp. It sounded like the dread footfall of the Commander in Don Giovanni. Tramp, tramp, tramp, like the beating pinions of Sleep and Death, as they bore away the body of Sarpedon. Tramp, tramp, tramp. I tried to sing, and my voice woke the hollow, sullen echoes for the first time. What could I sing but the old mournful lullaby, that rose to my lips unbidden.

“The bargemen seemed to bend to the poles more vigorously. I was glad to hear them pant, for it sounded like life. With a louder note I again broke forth, ‘Oh when shall I see the dusky lake?’

“The perspective lines were run out at last. We turned a reedy point, and a broad sheet of water lay before us. Ely Reed threw up his hand and cried, ‘The lake! Jim Pierce yelled, ‘The lake!’ ‘the lake!’ ‘The lake!’ I shouted, and then quickly relapsed into silence.

“The barge was made fast to the shore, hard by the entrance of the canal. I signed to the men to 178 land the baggage, and then, by creeping through the reeds and leaping from tussock to tussock, I got off far enough to be out of sight, and out of the sound of their voices, and seated myself upon a cypress root. There was the dream of my childhood fulfilled. It was neither new nor strange. I had seen it a thousand times in my

waking and sleeping dreams, as I saw it then, the broad expanse of dusky water with its dim circling shores, the same dark leaden waves rolling over its surface and losing themselves silently among the reeds and rushes. Then those gigantic skeletons of cypress that rose so grandly in the foreground, their wild, contorted limbs waving with weepers of funereal moss, that hung down even to the water. It was complete at all points, a picture of desolation. Desolation. He that is happy, whose love is true, whose debts are paid, whose children are blooming, may find strange pleasure in those fancifully wooing this awful phantom; but when inexorable fate has laid its icy grasp upon the heart-strings, then a man puts this by impatiently, and beckons joy to come. Even folly and frivolity are welcome guests to him.

“I have seen the lake, and a long life yearning has been gratified.

“I have seen the lake, and the romance of boyhood is undisturbed.

“I have seen the lake, and the recollection still enhances the mournful beauty of the old song.

“There may be those who have seen it with different 179 or indifferent eyes—let them call me fanciful, but disturb not my dream. Just then a bald eagle hovered over my head. Our glorious national emblem reminded me of stealing; and stealing, of niggers, and these, very naturally, of dinner. When I returned, I found Jim Pierce cooking some ham and eggs under a shed which had been recently occupied by some fisherman. Jim is a tall wiry black, with his hair plaited into numerous pig-tails—a mode of dressing the wool common among the blacks at the South. He has goggle eyes and an intelligent countenance, talks better than negroes usually do, and cooks remarkably well. Ely Reed is a turkey-egg mulatto, well-formed, but with an unprepossessing face—with nothing about him sufficiently striking to justify either a description or a sketch. I have pictured my men at this time because it was the first moment since we entered the Swamp that I had felt sufficiently disengaged to notice them. I made a hearty meal on the bacon and

eggs, and after dinner took a nap upon a bed of dried reeds. Toward evening it cleared off, and I ordered out the barge for a row on the lake. The sunset was glorious, but the rowing with the two oarsmen was rather heavy work, and I soon returned. The men built a fresh fire at the camp, and stretched themselves to sleep on two bits of plank. As the twilight faded out a mist began to gather over the water, and presently the full moon rose. These circumstances seemed like an invitation to indulge in a little more romance, and I sat myself 180 down upon a tussock apart from the negroes, to watch the moon rolling up from behind a group of frantic-looking old cypresses. I thought I heard the faint sound of a paddle far over the lake. As I bent to listen the sound became more and more distinct. Strange thought! Is it only fancy, or can there be wanderers in this solitude besides ourselves? The sound of a paddle had now become quite distinct, and was evidently nearing the point where I lay. By the light of the broad moon I could also see a white object moving rapidly toward me which soon took the well-defined form of a boat. I felt strangely. Can the old ballad be true, then? and do the phantom lovers still haunt the lonely lake? ‘how all my flesh's hair upstood.’ The white canoe shot up in the bay near our barge paddled not by the death-cold maid, as I confidently expected, but by Joe Skeeters. Joe Skeeters holds the office of single-counter for the Dismal Swamp Land Company, and in addition is a thoroughbred swamper, and an occasional fisherman on the lake. The camp of which we had taken possession belonged to him, as well as the nets that hung around it. Skeeters was not particularly prepossessing in his appearance and maybe a little blunt in his manners at first, but when he came to be properly understood he was a good fellow, and a very fair specimen of a Swamp gentleman. No French noble of the ancient 181 régime could have done the honors of a palace more appropriately than Joe did the honors of Lake Drummond to the stranger, He had with him a friend, or sort of lieutenant, who helped to paddle the new cypress canoe, to fish his gill nets, or cook, as he was wanted. The lieutenant landed two or three dozen speckled perch, while Skeeters and myself took a drink of bald-face together, which in those parts is the sacred pledge of hospitality, like the eating of salt among the Turks. ‘Jim Pierce,’ said the lieutenant, for they seemed to be well acquainted, ‘gim’ me dad da spida da.' Jim handed over the utensil,

when the fisherman proceeded to fry up some middling until the bottom of the skillet was fluent with grease.

“Into this he poured some water, and when it got hot he laid in the fish with some salt and several pods of red pepper. This mess was put to stew over a slow fire. In the meantime the lieutenant fried several of the large perch with special care until they were very brown and crisp.

“‘Jim Pierce,’ said he again, ‘dad da spida a bilin' da?’

“‘Yes, sir,’ said Jim.

“‘Den lift it off den.’

“When the mess was ready Skeeters approached me, and, with a bow, presented a clean cypress shingle:

“‘Come stranger, you must eat a perch with us.’

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“I had dined late, and commenced apologizing, but the lieutenant hospitably laid a large fish on my shingle:

“‘Come, stranga, you must eat, I briled him puppus faw you.’

“There was no resisting such genuine politeness. I ate the fish, and it was so sweet that I tried a second, then Skeeters pressed me to take some of the soup. I held out my shingle without resistance this time, but Joe recommended that it should be served in a tin cup. It was quite a luxury in its way, and I made a very hearty supper. After the meal was finished we told stories of hunting and fishing adventures in the mountains and the swamps alternately. The game is almost identically the same, and the mode of life not so dissimilar as one might suppose. In the Swamp are found bear, deer, otter, raccoons, possums, etc.,

pheasants, partridges, and wild ducks. The waters also abound in fresh-water fish, the most esteemed of which are the speckled perch. There are also a number of wild cattle that subsist upon the leaves and shoots of the reeds. Their flesh is of a remarkably fine flavor, and their ferocity sometimes makes them extremely dangerous to the hunter. It is not to be supposed, however, that this vast wilderness is by any means a common hunting place. On the contrary, it is rarely entered except by the most resolute and experienced swampers, and the wild beasts remain for the most part undisturbed in their gloomy and inaccessible retreat. When conversation 183 began to flag Skeeters' friend produced a dirty, well-thumbed pack of cards, and proposed a game of seven-up, mentioning, at the same time, that as he had no money we would not bet anything.

“With this innocent and moderately exciting amusement we passed the time until ten o'clock, when it was thought proper to look after the gill nets. I requested permission to accompany the lieutenant and we paddled away out into the lake, which lay smooth as glass in the misty moonlight. It was a wild, weird scene, suggestive to the imagination of more than language can express but I was recommended to sit steady in the canoe, and I soon became interested in the fishing. The sport was novel, but hardly more exciting than the game of fours, for most of the nets had nothing in them, and half a dozen perch the size of my hand, were the only reward of our labor. As we turned our prow landward I saw one of the nets shake violently, and something flashing and struggling in the water. A few strokes of the paddle brought us along side, and after an exciting fight, we succeeded in capturing a large black fish, who had unadvisedly fallen into our trap. The prize measured twenty-eight inches in length. On our return to camp we felt chilled, so hot toddy was served around, and we afterwards withdrew to our sleeping apartment. This was a board shanty, some paces distant from the cooking camp, which was the residence of the fishermen during the sporting season. Here I found my buffalo robe and blankets spread upon the 184 board of honor—an old bedstead bottomed with some smooth planks. The rest of the party took the floor. It might look like effeminancy to sleep on clean, smooth planks, but how could I refuse the delicate attention.? I enjoyed a night of sweet repose,

awakening two or three times to turn over and be again soothed to sleep by the snoring quartet performed by my companions.

“The morning was frosty, brisk and bright, and we were stirring betimes. The lake was entirely hidden by a thick coverlet of white mist, which lay upon its surface almost as palpable as if it had been a light cotton comforter, or mayhap an extensive cotton sheet. This was presently roiled off by a lively north-western breeze (that acted probably as maid of honor to the lake), and packed away for future use, we did not see where. Jim Pierce, meanwhile, had got us a capital breakfast, strong coffee, fish, ham and eggs, and for half an hour the shingles circulated freely.

“I was not romantic this morning, and as the wind promised no sport at the fishery, I determined to turn my prow landward.

“Once more in the canal, we were completely protected from the wind by the dense under-growth, and, under a cloudless sky, the aspect of things was more cheerful. Although statistics are stupid, it may be well to relieve the tedium of our homeward journey by some less poetical and more practical account of the Swamp. It would be difficult to define accurately the limits of the Swamp. On the Virginia 185 side it occupies considerable portions of Nansemond and Princess Anne counties, and in North Carolina, portions of Gates Pasquotank, Camden, and Currituck. Its area has been estimated at from six hundred to a thousand miles. Lake Drummond lies on the Virginia side, and near the center of the Swamp. It is a pond of eighteen or twenty miles in circuit, about seven across, measured from its most distant points, and averaging twelve or fifteen feet in depth. The water of the lake and the Swamp generally is dark-colored, like French brandy or strong coffee. It is fresh, healthful, pleasant to taste, and, it is said, will keep pure for an unlimited time. Hence it is often used by vessels going on long voyages. The lake is twelve miles distant from Suffolk, and twenty-two from Norfolk. Its surface is eleven or twelve feet above mid-tide, and there has been for a long time a question of supplying the latter city with water from this source. The practicability of so doing remains to be tested.

“Some years ago a hotel was erected on the shore of the lake, for the accommodation of pleasure parties that frequently resort there during the months of May and June. A stranger was one day dining at that house, and seeing before him a bottle containing a liquid which he took to be brandy, he helped himself, and mixed from another bottle that seemed to contain water. The mixture was rather strong, and he added more water, and so kept on drinking until he was entirely drunk and thoroughly perplexed.

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“‘Landlord!’ he stammered, ‘come here. This is darn'd queer brandy of yours. The more water I put in the stronger it gets.’

“Now the landlord had furnished white whiskey, that it might be readily distinguished from the water, and the innocent stranger had taken Swamp water for brandy, and had persevered in weakening his drink with white whiskey. The interior of the Swamp is said to be perfectly healthy, and free from those miasmatic diseases which prevail in the tide-water country generally. It was part of the scheme of the hotel speculator to make the lake a place of summer resort, where the people of the neighborhood might take refuge from the epidemics, but before the month of August, visitors, servants, and proprietors, had all cleared out and left the place in full possession of the mosquitoes and yellow-flies. These insects are said to be savage enough to worry the life out of a mule. The hotel was taken down.

“The principal trees in the Swamp are the gum, white pine, cypress, and juniper. The juniper is an evergreen like the cedar. The undergrowth is more varied, and during the summer months is surpassingly rich and luxuriant.

“The yellow jessamine, the laurel, the myrtle, and evergreen bay are the most striking. The reeds prevail everywhere. The land where the gums grow is reclaimable and very fertile, elsewhere the soil seems to be a spongy, half-formed peat, into which one may thrust a stick for ten or twenty feet without finding 187 solid bottom. In dry seasons, it sometimes

takes fire, and burns four or five feet below ordinary surface level. Besides the animals and wild fowl previously mentioned, the Swamp abounds in all the reptiles and insects common to the surrounding country. A canal, passing through the Swamp connects Norfolk harbor with the Pasquotank River in North Carolina. The canal passes within three or four miles of Lake Drummond, and is supplied by a feeder from the lake. Other improvements of a similar character, traversing portions of the Swamp and connecting the waters of Virginia with those of North Carolina, are now in progress. The Land Company's canal, the same by which I entered, connects the lake with the Nansemond River, near Suffolk. It is a narrow ditch, varying from seven to ten feet in depth, and serves for transportation of lumber from the interior of the Swamp. The Land Company, to which I have so frequently referred, was organized by General Washington after the termination of the Revolutionary War, and its original design was to reclaim and reduce the land to cultivation.

“This project failed, and has since been demonstrated to be impracticable, but the Company has realized almost fabulous proceeds from the timber—juniper, cypress, and white pine—that covers its grant. The Company owns a number of slaves, and hires others, who are employed in getting out the lumber in the shape of shingles, staves, etc. These hands are tasked, furnished with provisions at a fixed 188 rate, and paid for all work exceeding the required amount. Thus an expert and industrious workman may gain a considerable sum for himself in the course of the year. The Swamp is said to be inhabited by a number of escaped slaves, who spend their lives, and even raise families in its impenetrable fastness.

“These people live by woodcraft, external depredation, and more frequently, it is probable, by working for the task shingle-makers at reduced wages. These employees often return greater quantities of work than could by any possibility have been produced by their own labor, and draw for two or three times the amount of provisions necessary for their own subsistance. But the provisions are furnished, are paid for, and no questions are asked, so that the matter always remains a mystery.

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“But we have arrived at the Horse Camp, and the barge is hauled up a rude wharf, piled high with fresh-made shingles. From the landing a road, or causeway of logs, leads back into the Swamp. A hundred paces brings us to Horse Camp, the headquarters of shingle-makers of this district. A group of picturesque sheds afford accommodation for a number of men and mules.

“The occupants were absent at the time of my visit, and I had full opportunity to examine the premises. Although of the rudest character there seemed to be every material for physical comfort in abundance. There was bacon, salt fish, meal, molasses, whiskey, and sweet potatoes, besides plenty 189 of fodder for the mules. While I was sketching, a distant rumbling advised me of the approach of the shingle-carts. These presently passed, seven in number, loaded high with shingles, and each attended by a boy on foot. When they discharged their cargoes at the landing, the boys mounted the carts and returned at a brisker pace. These youthful drivers were not particularly well dressed, but did not appear to be overworked or ill-fed. Why this place is called Horse Camp I was not able to understand, as I was informed that a horse was never seen there—mules being the only animals proper for this particular service.

“Probably with the deference for high-blooded ancestry common in the Old Dominion, it is called after the progenitors of the present occupants.

“These nimble-footed animals get over the rough and unsteady causeway quite rapidly, and, to all appearance, understand the negro lingo perfectly. They have no bridle-reins, but are managed entirely by words and gestures, mostly consisting of oaths and kicks.

“When his load was discharged, I saw one of them walk off the causeway into a puddle, to get a drink or cool his feet, perhaps. His conductor pranced and hallooed.

“‘Wha he done gwine now? Debbelish cuss—go on de road, da. I lam de har' off you wid a shingle! Hear me tell you get on de road? I beat your head wid a rail!’

“This last threat decided the mule, and he quickly regained the causeway—clearly, to my mind, understanding the difference between being lammed with a shingle and pounded with a rail.

“The desire to eat forbidden fruit and see forbidden sights is the natural inheritance of the human race. Now I had long nurtured a wish to see one of those sable outlaws who dwell in the fastness of the Swamp! who, from impatience of servitude, or to escape the consequences of crime, have fled from society, and taken up their abode among the wild beasts of the wilderness. I had been informed that they were often employed in getting out lumber by the Swamp hands, and although I had been told there would be danger in any attempt to gratify this fancy, I determined to visit the spot where the shingle-makers were at work, to see what I could. I had previously ventured to question my men on the subject, but they evaded the questions, and changed the conversation immediately. I therefore ordered them back to the boat to prepare dinner, and walked alone along the causeway. When I had gone a mile or more I heard the sound of labor, and saw the smoke from a campfire.

“I here left the causeway, and made my way with the greatest difficulty through the tangled undergrowth. It is impossible to estimate distance under these circumstances, but I crawled and struggled on until I was nearly exhausted. At length my attention was arrested by the crackling sound of other 191 footsteps than my own. I paused, held my breath, and sunk quietly down among the reeds. About thirty paces from me, I saw a gigantic negro, with a tattered blanket wrapped around his shoulders, and a gun in his hand. His head was bare, and he had little other clothing than a pair of ragged breeches and boots. His hair and beard were tipped with gray, and his purely African features were cast in a mold betokening, in the highest degree, strength and energy. The expression of the face was of mingled fear and ferocity, and every movement betrayed a life of habitual caution and watchfulness. He reached forward his iron hand to clear away the briery screen that half

concealed him while it interrupted his scrutinizing glance: fortunately he did not discover me, but presently turned and disappeared. When the sound of his retreating footsteps died away, I drew a long free breath, and got back to the causeway with all haste. There I sat down to rest and to make a hasty sketch of the remarkable figure I had just seen: on returning to the barge I found dinner waiting, and intentionally left my drawing where the men could see it. As Jim Pierce passed it, he uttered an exclamation and beckoned to Ely: I fancied I heard the word Osman.

"'Do you know that, Jim.?'

"'No, sir,' said he promptly: 'dunno nuthin' 'bout um.'

"The men continued to converse together in low whispers, and with looks expressive of astonishment. 192 I began to get nervous, I had been rash in showing the picture—yet how, and why? Who was Osman?

"Was I the possessor of a dangerous secret? In the swamp a man might easily be murdered and concealed where the buzzards couldn't find him. Ely Reed approached me, and doffing his hat made a defferential bow: I expected a startling revelation.

"'Master,' said Ely, 'will you draw my picture and give it to me to take home?'

"'What do you want with your picture, Ely?'

"'To take home, Sir, to my wife and little daughter, to see if they'll know it.'

"There was nothing to be apprehended from Ely. 'He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune' or, as it were, bonds to society for his good behavior: consequently no bachelor ought to have a vote or be eligible to public office. I gratified Ely's request and we started homeward.

“From the effects of a hearty dinner, and a weariness of the perceptive faculties, I slept during the greater part of this portion of the journey. I was not aware that I missed anything by so doing except some whiskey. But I asked no questions, and intended no insinuations.

“At Bonneville's I left my barge, took leave of my men, shouldered my knapsack, and returned to Suffolk on foot.”

Colonel William H. Stewart, of Portsmouth, Virginia, who lived in the Dismal Swamp both as a boy and man and was therefore a valuable “Human Document” 193 concerning it, wrote a description of the region for the “ *Old Jamestown Digest.* ” The greater part of Colonel Stewart's article is as follows:

“To the youthful mind the Dismal Swamp of Virginia and North Carolina is like the Everglades of Florida, the Mammoth Caves of Kentucky, and the Grand Canyon of the Colorado; one of those wonderful, mysterious, never-to-be-visited places, as inaccessible almost as the North Pole, and where abound alligators, reptiles, tarantula and other deadly animals. As one's horizon enlarges with age the Dismal Swamp appears to be just as inaccessible as ever. The much traveled man or woman may have visited many of the out-of-the-way corners of the earth and yet never seen Lake Drummond, although this picturesque sheet of water lies less than two hundred miles from Washington city. A night's journey down the waters of the Potomac to Norfolk will bring the tourist within fifteen miles of the shores of this swamp lake, and a canal steamer plying between Norfolk and Albemarle Sound, makes it accessible to those who have the leisure to explore its charm.

“The Dismal Swamp is at all seasons most attractive to lovers of nature. In winter it is the sportsman's paradise, for the black bear and the deer roam at will unmolested in these forest depths, while in spring and summer the student of natural history or botany may revel here to his heart's content.

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“Lake Drummond was named for the first governor 194 of North Carolina. Situated in the center of the great unkempt forest, with its tangle of cane and vines, its shores are ragged with roots and stumps of trees left bare and clean by the careless washing of the waters. They are cross-tied and interlocked by floating logs worn into grooves by rubbing the stump roots in the motion of waves. As the earth washes out the wood grinds in the perpetual motion of wind and water, rushing the logs of cypress and juniper hither and thither.

“Out from the lake comes the peaty bog where the juniper trees grow and vines of many kinds and colors make impenetrable entanglements. The bog can be pierced from six to fifteen feet with a sharp rod, and down beneath, juniper logs are buried and ever remain in a perfect state of preservation. When discovered these logs are sawed in twain and pried out to be riven into shingles or cooper staves. The cross-cut saw, with one handle, pierces through the bog, and cuts the log in sections, not more than two feet long, before it is pried from its bed, and then the frow and maul in the hands of a sturdy African rive out the lumber, which is dressed into shingles and staves with the drawing knife.

“There was an immense trade in shingles and staves before the Civil War, and the swamp is interlaced with corduroy roads over which the two foot long and twelve inch wide shingles were hauled to waterways in mule carts. These cartways are now overgrown with briars and vines, but if shown on a 195 drawing would appear like the railroads on?ne map of Illinois.

“Tramways for cars drawn by mules have now been substituted for the old corduroy roads, and the hauling is heavier on account of the demand for juniper telegraph poles, railroad ties and round logs for the great bucket and barrel mills, which are cut from the growing trees. The old buried timber rests in the safe keeping of the soil. The tram road is too narrow for the propelling power to pass on the side of the car, so the mule is trained

to mount over the truck from one end to the other instead of a turn table. The logs are ‘lightered’ from the landings to the great mills at Gilmerton and Richmond, Virginia.

“In the days of the by-gone time slaves were the privileged class in the manufacture of swamp timber. They hired themselves from their masters, and made shingles ‘by the thousand’ for the owners of the swamp. Away back in the wild and lonesome depths they sawed and rived and dressed the shingles which covered many happy homes in the far away north. They were not lonely, for the sound of the maul, the singing of the birds and the noise of the cross-cut saw were lively companions; and the dreamless sleep after labors of the day made creatures of contentment. The slaves of the swamp were healthy, and the good men were moral and frugal. They would work in the wilds for two weeks or a month and then come out and spend a day or two with their families, which were domiciled in neat and comfortable cabins. 196 The industrious swamper was generally a good Christian man and highly respected by the white people.

“The trees, wild flowers, reeds and ferns in the spring time enrobed the great wilderness most magnificently and gave the black frow-man environments in some respects more glorious than the surroundings of royal palaces.

“The section called the Dismal Swamp is not all covered with juniper bog, but where the great cypress, maple, poplar, pine, ash, gum and oak trees grow the soil is fertile, and large farms have been made on the black soil lands, which are highly productive of Indian corn, potatoes, cotton and various small grains. The lands so recovered have proved most ‘lasting,’ bearing cultivation for many years without fertilizers. The most noted plantations of the swamp are ‘Dover,’ of one thousand acres, and ‘Cumberland,’ of three thousand acres, in one body.

“On the eastern side of the swamp is a little farm reached by a corduroy road two miles from the highway leading from the Dismal Swamp canal, through Ballahack to Currituck County, N. C. entirely surrounded by a deep and heavily timbered swamp that is most of

the time entirely submerged in the red juniper water. A hingeless gate across this corduroy road bars the outside world from the farm and keeps the cattle in place. The farm rises between two and three feet above its wooded and watery surroundings, and tradition says it was cultivated by the Indians before the settlement of Jamestown, and this tradition 197 is supported by the fact that arrow heads, tomahawks and stone utensils used by them are often plowed up in the cultivation of the land. The little island farm contains about thirty-five acres and is naturally graded so that it has no gullies, nor has it ever required a ditch to drain it. The water in the well, drawn by the old swinging juniper bucket, is as clear as crystal and perfectly healthy. It is an ideal farm in the quiet wilderness which would make a recluse forever happy. The cows, hogs and sheep, the chickens, ducks and bees, the corn, cotton, cabbage, apples, pears, plums, peaches and quinces, with the roses, dandelions and curling leaves of shrubs make the home attractive, as well as plentifully supplied with nature's bounties. The quaint little cottage is mostly constructed of boards riven from juniper trees from the bordering swamp. It is clean and cozy, with potted flower decorations, that tell of the gentle hand of womanhood. The barn, stables and fencing are all built of everlasting juniper timber riven out of trees which grew in a stone's throw of this hidden farm. The place is known as ‘Smith's Ridge,’ perhaps for the honor of the fierce adventurer, known as the father of Virginia's first settlement. This is an excellent hunting ground, and was often frequented by the Poteskoit (Currituck) Indians, so tradition tells.

“When the leaves are falling from the frosting nights, go down in the swamp as the twilght shadows are growing; you may chance to see a black bear 198 mount from the thick reeds and rush up a great gum tree to sup on gumberries; watch him as he reaches the top, straddles a strong limb, listens with sharp ears, turns his head to scent the air for a moment for enemies, and then satisfied of safety, reaches out with both fore-paws and draws in the switches laden with fruit. Now see how he shakes his head in gathering the berries from the sprigs, and how he chews them with supreme enjoyment. His antics are amusing, for his awkward nimbleness brings a smile to one fortunate enough to witness a bear feasting on gumberries or acorns after the frosts have ripened them under the

withered leaves of the great swamp trees, while the squirrels may be feeding in the oaks and prancing over the limbs. Such sights may be seen on Smith's Ridge in the autumn time.

“The Dismal Swamp spreads out southwardly from the counties of Nansemond and Norfolk in Virginia into Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank and Perquimons in North Carolina, but its boundaries are very irregular and difficult to accurately define. Its lake is also in the two states, but the largest part is in Virginia. It is the source of many rivers. The head of the western branch of the Elizabeth River is lost in its northern border, and the Pasquotank River near its source runs red with the juniper water from the southern side of the swamp. The Dismal Swamp canal was first projected to connect these two rivers for inland navigation and to drain adjacent lands. On the first day of December, 1887, the Legislature 199 of Virginia granted a charter to a company having a capital of $80,000 to construct this canal. It specified that subscriptions to the stock should be paid in Spanish milled dollars or silver or gold of the same value. The Legislature of North Carolina passed a similar act with some slight difference in regard to dimensions. Ten years was fixed by the charter for its completion; but the time was extended five years on the sixteenth of December, 1800, and was further extended on February 14, 1816. The States of North Carolina and Virginia and the government of the United States became stockholders to help the great public enterprise. The first vessel passed through it in 1822, and it was finally completed in 1826.

“The canal connects the southern branch of the Elizabeth River from its branch known as Deep Creek with the Pasquotank River in North Carolina. It begins at the ancient village of Deep Creek in Norfolk County, Virginia, running thence southwardly twenty-two miles, with one angle about two miles north from the State line, to the town of South Mills in Camden County, North Carolina.

“The ante-bellum trade through the canal came principally from the rivers and sounds of North Carolina and immense quantities of shingles, lumber and grain from the eastern

section of that State were annually shipped to Norfolk, Portsmouth, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York in schooners built especially for that trade. These vessels were towed through the canal by mule teams hitched to the craft by a long 200 rope extending to the tow-path along the edge of the canal.

“The trade flourished many years prior to the civil war. The Confederates cut the banks to let the water out in 1862 to prevent the Federals from using it if they should attempt to approach Norfolk and Portsmouth from the sounds of North Carolina which they possessed after the fall of Roanoke Island. After the Confederate evacuation the United States government took possession of the canal for military purposes.

“When the company obtained possession after the conclusion of hostilities it made efforts to repair it for navigation, and securing legislative act to issue bonds began enlarging and improving the waterway, but failed after considerable work in widening and deepening it. Finally it was purchased by a company which has worked out its salvation by fully reconstructing it. The canal is now about eighty feet wide with ten feet of water over the mitre sills of two locks, each two hundred and fifty feet long and forty feet wide.

“The new company began the work of enlarging with great hydraulic and dipper dredges on the fifteenth day of February, 1896, and the canal was reopened for navigation on the fourteenth day of October, 1899, when the United States torpedo boat *Talbot* made a rapid and successful trip through it to and from Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The *Talbot* was commanded by Lieut. J. S. Doddridge, 201 U. S. N. who was presented with a gold mounted sword by his native state, West Virginia, for gallant and meritorious conduct on the *Olympia* in the battle of Manila Bay on the first day of May, 1898.

“The canal is supplied with water from Lake Drummond through a ‘feeder’ three mines long running west from a point about a mile north of the angle. When the dredge was deepening this ‘feeder’ it struck a bed of shells ten or fifteen feet below the surface of the land, and many were in a good state of preservation. How long these oysters and

other shells had been buried under the peat of the Dismal Swamp is a question for the scientists. To the west of the swamp in Nansemond county is a well defined sea beach, which indicates that in buried ages the Atlantic Ocean rolled over what is now the great swamp.

“The Dismal Swamp canal is one of the connecting links of inland waterways between Hampton Roads and the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds of North Carolina, which when completed, will permit large vessels to go south in safety without the risk of shipwreck on the treacherous coast of Hatteras. It has been suggested that the government should take up the matter of making connecting links south to the Gulf of Mexico, so that its entire torpedo fleet could start from Boston, Massachusetts, and by inland water-ways, without passing into the Atlantic, enter the gulf somewhere between Tampa, Florida, and Mobile, Alabama.”

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A correspondent of the *Nation* sent to that paper an article on the swamp which was dated at Richmond, November 28, 1882. Its chief interest seems to lie in the northern view of the South contained therein. It was as follows:

“The Great Dismal Swamp boat did not leave till three o'clock in the afternoon. It so happened that her license held good till the 23d of November. inclusive, and here was November 24. It was necessary for her to have a new one before she could sail with the proper consciousness of being able, in case of disaster, to shuffle off the responsibility on some one else. The inspectors did not arrive. The skipper assured me they had been sent for, by buggy, several times, but it was due to their dignity as officials at first not to be found, then not to come until they got ready. Otherwise, we should have been off at 6 A. M. I had had a charming journey in the Old Dominion steamer from New York to Norfolk. Instead of being tempestuous, as might naturally have been expected at this time of the year, both sea and atmosphere took their cue from the South which we approached. The water was as calm as that of the smoothest river; azure blue besides, and covered with a

multitude of sails, mostly those of wood and lumber barks going North. At night the moon, exactly full, shone with a milk-like aspect in a faintly misty atmosphere. Having thus arrived at Norfolk under circumstances to soften the temper of the most austere, 203 I was moved to venture southward into the Great Dismal Swamp, concerning which I had had from my earliest days a great curiosity. The large tract in lower Virginia and upper Carolina, dotted with conventional tree marks, and bearing this title in the school geography, seemed full of wonders.

“Few Norfolk people have been to the Swamp, and I was advised as to the best means of getting there with that uncertain, deliberative look which it is never safe to trust. A hotel proprietor, after consulting with all his acquaintances, promised with a kind of cheery despair to let me know all about it before morning. An editor advised the taking of a train to Suffolk, with a view of getting down from there by a branch canal which the country map seems to indicate. ‘But suppose I should find that I could not get down from there?’ I said. ‘Oh, then you could come back, you know,’ he offered as a happy solution. Some insisted that there was no canal from Suffolk, but that you could drive; others, that there was a canal, but no boats, while the idea of a road was preposterous. However, it does not do to push too far people who are trying to help you, and I trust I left my informants a share of their self-respect. All agreed that Lake Drummond was the point to be aimed for; that without this—the heart and supply reservoir of the Swamp—its most distinctive feature would be missed. I found that there was a canal in good and regular standing extending through the whole tract to Elizabeth City, on the Pasquotank 204 River, and that the *Thomas Newton,* propeller, was in the habit of making the trip to the terminus one day and returning the next. It did not go to Lake Drummond, it is true, which is three miles distant from the canal at its nearest point, but by degrees it dawned upon the skipper that a small boat might perhaps be obtained at a place he called Duke's Wharf to complete the connection. The only question was, as the day waned, where I was to be left over night; but we all took the chances on that in the end, and I remained aboard.

“The adventures of the long day until the hour of sailing, if set down would be of the same kind as those in Howells' ‘A Day's Pleasure.’ Hope was crushed to earth with the coming of every man not a tatterdemalion, coal-black negro down the wharf, and rose again with his successor. Having no standard of comparison, it was difficult to tell what a Norfolk inspector would be like. We dined on board, and the excellence of the cookery is really worth remarking upon. The good Virginia beef, boiled ham, sweet potatoes, and corn bread, supplied by our grotesque negro cook in his white cap, were of a quality which is by no means surpassed as a rule in the hotels of this section, even at Richmond. We studied the cut and equipment of our boat. She was a double-decker of forty-seven tons burden. She was preposterously high and narrow, being limited as to width by the exigencies of the canal. Her speed was also limited, we found, to four miles an hour, for fear of 205 washing out the canal banks. At length the inspector, a taciturn man with a broad back and a thick lead-pencil, which he often moistened in his mouth, was discovered to have been some time on board, and to be nearly through his labors. Nothing now remained to be secured but the signature of another inspector in another part of the town. This was done within an hour and a half, and we were off.

“The canal makes out of the western branch of the Elizabeth River, due south of Norfolk. We steamed past a comfortable-looking marine hospital, backed by a tall grove of pine trees, then past the famous Gosport navy yard, evacuated and burned by our own forces a week after the attack on Sumter. General Mahone, since prominent in modern Virginia politics, was at the time President of the Petersburg Railroad. He ran empty trains up and down all night on his road, making the locomotives whistle and scream to the top of their capacity, with the object—in which he succeeded—of making the Union troops believe that the Rebels were mustering in force and thus causing them to leave their work incomplete. At the entrance lock an extremely ragged old negro, the ‘Uncle Snow’ of the minstrel companies, slowly raised the gates for us. The water which came rushing out of them was, underneath the foam, of the color of port. Taken out in a glass it is of a rich amber tone. It is known as ‘juniper water,’ and is, as we had found at dinner, the favorite beverage of the

section. It is supposed to be strongly impregnated 206 from the juniper trees around the bases of which it flows, and to contain also sarsaparilla. An enterprising person is said to have lately begun bottling it for the New York market. It is certain that it contains plenty of vegetable mold of some kind, and that it appears to do the inhabitants no great harm.

“On entering the canal there is no overarching of dark foliage with funeral moss depending from it, as might have been expected. On the contrary, at the left there is a considerable dry wide space with a good road upon it, bare of vegetation other than grass and weeds, and interspersed with cornfields. On the right is a straggling expanse of forest bushes, vines, and reeds; the black gum, now denuded of its foliage, and numerous other trees blasted by fire, jutting out in a mournful way from the green. There are no snakes, no alligators, and few glimpses even of stagnant pools. Surprise continues to grow at the civilized appearance of things. One begins to doubt the existence of a swamp at all. The Great Dismal Swamp has in fact been much reduced in extent. It contains, strange as it may seem, some of the best farming land in either State; a railroad runs across a portion of it, and it is perhaps on its way to final extinction. Still, when one looks out at the impenetrable tangle on shore and learns that he might flounder through it for ten or fifteen miles before striking real terra firma, it is dismal enough. It was a certain Colonel Byrd, it seems, to whom was assigned 207 the task of running a survey across it as far back as the year 1727, and was able to make but a mile a day in his journey, who gave it its name. It covers an extent of about twenty-five miles by twelve. Lake Drummond, in its center —a sheet of water more than five miles long and three wide, though often estimated of much larger dimensions—is at the top of a knoll higher than any part of the surrounding area. By exhausting this lake, therefore, the Swamp could be drained. It is more profitable, however, in its present condition. The great industry of the Swamp is lumbering. It is penetrated by small ditches, in connection with the larger canals, and by rude tram-roads, which haul the juniper, holly, and cypress logs down to be sawed up into shingles, railroad ties, fencing, and telegraph posts by mills conveniently placed. The lumbermen engaged in this work cluster together in temporary huts. If there be other residents of the Swamp,

successors to the fugitive slaves of whom it used once to be full, they are very few. The real dwellers in it are said never to die, but to dry up, or to be preserved from decay at least by their forests, like clothing contained in a juniper chest.

“I had many of these details from a most courteous and kindly old gentleman of the old school. He was going down, with his small family and an orphan girl whom he had had bound out to him from the asylum, to his place at South Mills, on the canal, which he described as a pleasant and thriving village. 208 Before the war he had been the owner of a hundred slaves. He has met no less than six of them employed as waiters at the hotel where we had just been stopping. The eiders among them still call him Master, and all pay an extra attention to his wants. He complained of the difficulty of getting labor and of the poor quality of it.

“‘The young generation,’ he said, ‘will not work steadily. They cannot be depended upon. It is all politics, religion, and frolic with them. Their religion has no effect in making them conscientious and reliable. They are the greatest politicians the world ever saw. The only way to get work out of them is to find some old man with a slave bringing-up who has some boys, give him a piece of land and look after him, and he will manage to keep the boys at it.’

“He was a colonel—that goes without saying. The only wonder was, that with a presence of such dignity and an experience of many years, as it appeared, in the North Carolina Legislature, he should not have risen to the grade of general. This was accounted for by the fact that he was one of the few to foresee the horrors of the war and to speak against secession to the last moment, though he ultimately joined the movement. Though a patriotic Confederate when once the die was cast, Jefferson Davis, his President, bearing this in mind, obstinately refused to advance him to higher posts, which I have not a doubt he merited.

“I did not proceed far enough to see South Mills, 209 but there was another witness on board to testify that it was a place of attractions. This was a young lady who was addressed after the Southern fashion as, let us say, ‘Miz Molly.’ She was a minister's daughter and had been to Norfolk to attend conference. South Mills, she said, had 250 inhabitants. It was a social, lively place, and she preferred it to any other in the world. Three other girls had come down early in the morning to see her off, but their patience had been exhausted by the inspector. ‘I am awfully glad to get rid of yo' all,’ Miss Molly had screamed after them as they went away. Her manners were good, those of the Colonel's lady were even better, and their local accent certainly very agreeable. In short, they were not at all the kind of persons one would naturally expect to describe as his fellow-travelers into the benighted Dismal Swamp. Miss Molly gave me, unsolicited, her opinion of the negro question, and I was not imprudent enough to argue it with her. ‘I do despise a negro,’ she said, ‘more than’ most anything in this world, I reckon. I got no use for 'em anyhow. If one of 'em was to sit down at the same table with me, I'd get up and go hungry. The teacher down our way is almost white, and she's a graduate of Rahleigh College. It don't make any difference. No money would hire me to do it. I'd get up and go hungry.’

“We passed the village and locks of Deep Creek. Some years ago, when shingles were made by hand, 210 Deep Creek was a flourishing, ambitious settlement, full of money, which was gambled away in great sums at a sitting. Now that the machine has usurped the place of hand labor and its principal industry is gone elsewhere, it is a mere knot of houses and a shabby store and bar-room or two, with their shutters principally up. Roper, a Northern man, come in since the war, is doing a prosperous business in cutting up shingles and staves for juniper buckets—‘Every clip a shingle,’ commented our skipper in admiration, as the sharp broken song of the saws rang out upon the air.

“The sun set red over the dark forest. Some scattering negro huts, with a few cornstalks around them, and a negro with an ax returning from the forest, were seen. Then the perfect full moon came up. The tall narrow *Thomas Newton* plodded steadily onward at

her four miles an hour, displacing a great deal of water, which rushed backward in a surf-like wave on each side, yet so discreetly as not to harm the banks of the canal. What with natural scenery, and the counsels of the skipper, the Colonel, Miss Molly, and others upon my new situation, it seemed all too soon when eight o clock arrived and I was set ashore. It had been determined that I had better be left at ‘Wallace's,’ a mile this side of Duke's Wharf. At Wallace's accordingly, in the heart of the Great Dismal Swamp, of a bright moonlight night, I was left. There were several of the name, the most well-to-do family in all the section round about, and their white 211 farmhouses, granaries, store, and saw-mill could be seen clustered near together. I made a bargain with a negro boy to have a row-boat ready for me at seven in the morning to take me to the feeder, as it is called, and so up into Lake Drummond. It should be explained that Lake Drummond through this feeder furnishes the main water supply for the canal. In the house were found refined and hospitable people, children who had been sent away from home to be educated, the magazines and other good reading matter.

“I was awakened out of a sound sleep by a loud knocking at the door below. It was not yet daybreak, and the air was very raw and chilly. I made sure that it was my attendant come to announce the boat as in readiness. It seemed a dismal swamp indeed that required the getting out of bed at that hour to penetrate to its dark lake. Fortunately this proved a false alarm; it was little past midnight, in fact, and the boatman, with the promptitude of his race, did not arrive till a good hour and a half after the appointed time, when the sun was high and genial in the heavens. His name was David Taylor. He had brought a ponderous old yawl, with a pole and a bit of broken oar as means of propulsion. He at first undertook to scull the boat, while I walked briskly along the tow-path for the exercise, but he made at the rate of hardly more than a mile in two days. Then I took a rope from the bow over my shoulder with the design of pulling him on while he kept the 212 boat off in the stream. This proceeding appeared to impress David Taylor by its vigor, and he inquired if I was not from the North. He was not able to keep the craft from running at every moment into the bushes. This would never do, as I wished to return by noon, in order to get back to Norfolk

at night. By my order he abandoned the yawl, and we hurried on to Duke's Wharf, where we were fortunate enough to secure a light skiff with two pairs of oars. Duke's Wharf is simply a store and shipping point for lumber kept by one Duke.

“The narrow little feeder, of about the dimensions of a good irrigation canal on the Pacific Slope, was entered soon after this. The wind sprang up dead against us, but the vegetation shielded us from it in the main. There were no great gloomy trees here more than before, but the reeds, vines, and underbrush constituted a maze that seemed hopeless to penetrate. Bunches of gall-berries and red seed berries of the wild rose were prominent in front. In summer there are said to be plenty of moccasin snakes. When there is a fire in the woods it drives them out, with bears and other denizens of the thickets, in great numbers. Such fires are not infrequent, and they often take a hold that is unknown elsewhere, burning into the very vitals of the ground. There are in places deposits of dry vegetable matter ten and twelve feet deep before any soil is arrived at, and this constitutes inflammable material. It is thought by some that the bed of Lake Drummond itself may 213 have been formed in this way, a vast hole having been burned at the summit of the knoll, and afterward filled by the springs. Through the fires and constant lumbering of a hundred years the great primitive junipers have been destroyed. Those now sought, though of good size, are of hardly more than twelve years' growth. Washington was the owner of a large body of lands in the Swamp, and recommended the cutting of the canal, which was one of the earliest works of its kind in our country. It was navigated in small boats, and shingles and lumber got out to go to the West Indies, before the close of the last century. The latest locks of the improved and widened system, were put in about 1831. It fell into difficulties of one sort and another after the war, and a work which had cost more than $1,000,000 was sold for $275,000. It is now in the hands of a management which seems able to draw from the transport of the cotton, garden truck, and other matters, in addition to lumber, which pass up and down on it, a shrewd profit.

“We met with some large lumber barges, or lighters, empty and full, going to or returning from a principal camp on the far side of Lake Drummond. The negroes on them seemed

of a wilder, more essentially Ethiopian sort than those we are accustomed to at the North. Those having the empty barges in charge propelled them by walking on the slight swampy tow-path and throwing their weight in a picturesque way on long poles attached to thole-pins 214 on the sides. At a final lock near the lake lived a lonely spiritless gate keeper, in a house which had been carried down by the weight of its brick chimney into the spongy ground, and imitated in its poor way the leaning tower of Pisa. By it stood a persimmon tree hanging full of over-ripe fruit, which made the eyes of David Taylor sparkle.

"'If it was me,' he said in a tone of regret at such shiftless waste, 'I would have me some good beer out of it befo' Christmas.' 'Beer out of persimmons?' 'Yes; you get you a good barrel—a flour or cider barrel—put you plenty o' persimmons; then you put you in your water, plenty o' water; then let it stand, then I reckon you put you in a little mo' water. In 'bout fo' six weeks you get you some ripe smart good beer.'

"The three miles up the narrow feeder, with the wind and current against us, had seemed interminable, but it was over. Beyond the lock was a charming reach of quieter wide canal. It was completely over-arched, and the sunshine struck through the foliage, mellowed by the tints of autumn, making a most genial golden-green bower of it. But now was seen a striking and mysterious spectacle. The wind, which was shorn of force in this quiet bower, was driving up the waters of the lake into a powerful surf. The white-capped breakers were running at the edge of the dark blue turbulent expanse in an angry and quite terrifying way. 'Better not cross the lake to-day unless you are water birds!' The 215 lock-keeper had told us, and it was useless indeed to try. We went out a little way, however, till we were pitched and tossed about in lively fashion, and pounded upon one of the stumps hidden like rocks below the surface. Then we made under the lee of a little islet, formed by the knotted roots of a couple of trees growing out of the water, and held fast a while to a tangle of vines twisting about them for the view. If the place were once a haunt of runaway slaves, the condition must have been hard indeed to which this would be preferred. A man might sleep, perchance, by lashing himself securely in among these vines, but he would not have a foot of earth to stand upon. The water is often six feet and more in depth among

the trees, but in front of us, amid the dashing waves, rose isolated cypresses, some black, some weather-worn gray, with broad bases, tower-like, with openings between their gnarled roots, and a scanty russet foliage above. Here and there project the fangs of rotted black stumps. The line of distant forests, all around the great expanse, was a line of bare stems taking a faint violet tone in their remoteness across the troubled dark blue. What a *noli me tangere* place! Absolutely not a landing spot in all its margins. It might be a new punishment added to the inferno to conceive a storm-driven bark seeking haplessly round and round it in search of one.

“The return, with everything favoring, was made in much quicker time. We left our skiff again at Duke's, and I had an opportunity, under the guidance 216 of my hospitable host, of examining the mills and farms by daylight. The whole establishment was like a great piece of Yankee enterprise, and by no means in accord with conventional traditions of the Southern way of doing things. The principal farm building was a real mansion; the smaller, comfortable low cottages, their porches clad with honeysuckle. One would fancy himself among the richest agricultural lands of central New York or the Illinois prairies. Some one thousand acres of land were here under cultivation, carefully drained, and giving a great yield of corn and hay. The raising of hay is a new experiment and has proved very successful. A considerable quantity of rice was also raised on the dry, instead of the flooded system, as further South, but gave less to the acre, I was told, than at South Mills, near Elizabeth City. The land upon which the scattering black gum, useless itself as timber, grows is excellently adapted to agriculture. That which contains juniper, on the other hand, is comparatively worthless when the timber is cut off. Gen. B. F. Butler, whose proceedings in so many ways we have been accustomed to find remarkable, conceived some years ago a notable project with regard to this section. He was a member of Congress at the time, and a bill was introduced to facilitate it. He proposed to make the Dismal Swamp Canal a ship canal, buy up, with the aid of a company, half a mile of land on each side of it, clear it off, and make a truck patch, similar to those about Norfolk, for supplying 217 vegetables to the Northern cities. It was then not too long after the war, and

Butler still rested under a peculiar odium from it. He is said to have been jeered at and grievously insulted even by the hackman who drove him out to the site of operations, so that he threw up the project in disgust, and it has never since been revived.

“I was driven back to Portsmouth opposite Norfolk, sixteen miles, in late afternoon, behind a horse whose driver said of him: ‘I don't reckon there is a more willin' horse anywheres around than this. He'd go till he dropped.’ And he did indeed show evidences of this peculiar kind of ambition. We passed the sedate *Thomas Newton,* on her return trip to-day, standing up out of the water like a small light house, within eight miles, though she had had two hours the start of us. We went over an excellent piece of shell road the last half of the way from Deep Creek. The fields along the way were as green with grass, turnips, and rutabagas as in summer.”

W. H. B.

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF THE DISMAL SWAMP

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GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF THE DISMAL SWAMP 1

1 Remarks made before the Washington Academy of Sciences on board the steamer “Southland” between Washington and Norfolk, April 29, 1911.

BY E. W. SHAW, U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

The general features and relations of the Coastal Plain are familiar. This plain extends from the Piedmont Plateau, a rough more or less elevated region of hard crystalline rocks, in western parts of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and parts of adjacent States, out to the Coast and under the waters of the Atlantic for a hundred miles or so to an escarpment known as the edge of the Continental Shelf. Beyond this there is very deep water. Thus about half the Coastal Plain Province is beneath the waters of the Atlantic and the other

half lies between the present shore and a line drawn through Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Raleigh, North Carolina. The general eastward slope of the surface amounts to four or five feet to the mile, so that if the land were elevated or depressed a hundred feet, the seashore would be shifted twenty or twenty-five miles.

It should be borne in mind that movements of the sea floor also affect the position of the coast line, but 222 that local movements of the land cause only local changes in the seashore, whereas local movements of the sea bottom have general effects upon the coast line throughout the world. In the development of our Coastal Plain both processes seem to have operated, for although the general arrangement of the ancient coast lines, as indicated by sea deposits and shore features, is regular, there is much irregularity in detail and the coast has not at any time moved exactly parallel to itself. In general the oldest formations outcrop on the landward side of the Coastal Plain, and progressively younger formations outcrop toward the sea, showing a gradual retreat of the sea, but in detail there are many irregularities—thickenings, thinnings, overlaps, unconformities, etc., showing that the movements of the coast have varied in direction and amount both from time to time and from place to place.

In Virginia the oldest deposits of the Coastal Plain are Lower Cretaceous. These dip to the east under Upper Cretaceous which in turn pass under Eocene and Miocene beds. Each of these classes of rocks includes clay, sand and gravel, and most of them contain green sand and marl. At several places in the section there are hiatuses represented elsewhere by deposits scores or hundreds of feet in thickness.

In Late Tertiary or Early Quaternary time the sea seems to have spread almost completely across the Coastal Plain again. At least the area of sedimentation spread across to the Piedmont Plateau and extended 223 up some of the valleys in that region. The material deposited at this time is coarse and is widely known as the Lafayette formation. This formation overlies all the older rocks of the Coastal Plain and tends to even up the irregularities of the surface produced by previous erosion. A deep well on the coast at

Fortress Monroe passed through all of these rocks, the Quaternary, Miocene, Eocene, Upper Cretaceous and Lower Cretaceous, reaching the crystalline rocks at a depth of a little over two thousand feet.

The events of Quaternary time, since the deposit of the so-called Lafayette conglomerate, have consisted on the whole of an intermittent retreat of the sea. The retreat has not been regular throughout the length of the coast line, and there may have been times of local advance, but the salient points of the history are a general retreat with four or five halts when low sea cliffs and submarine terraces were formed. The resulting land surface to-day is a terraced coastal plain. The principal terraces are known as the Lafayette, Sunderland, Wicomico, Talbot, and Recent. Each terrace slopes toward the sea, though at a less rate than the general slope of the coastal plain, and each averages about thirty or forty feet in height, though the height and perfection of the terraces vary considerably.

The Dismal Swamp is situated on the lowest and youngest or Talbot terrace, and is bordered on the west by an escarpment leading up to the Wicomico terrace. Farther west there follow in succession the 224 Sunderland and Lafayette terraces. The surface features about the swamp are in part wave cut and in part wave built and are modified by stream erosion, the accumulation of vegetable material, and along the coast the development of sand dunes. After the formation of the Wicomico terrace the shore retreated perhaps half way out to its present position, then in an epoch of quiescence the waves cut back forming a cliff and submarine terrace. There came another time of emergence, the cliff becoming the front of the Wicomico terrace and the submarine terrace becoming the top of the Talbot terrace upon which the Dismal Swamp is situated. Since that time the sea has been again attacking the land, developing a cliff and terrace, the latter being known as the Recent terrace.

As to the origin of the swamp, there seems to be some difference of opinion. Two hypotheses are worthy of attention. Professor Shaler says that this swamp, like many others, was developed by the clogging of drainage through vegetation. He says that when

the surface emerged from the sea it did so rapidly, as is shown by the fact that there are no intermediate terraces; that the old shore had vegetation; and that the new shore, owing to greater humidity, was covered by a growth of timber before the new and barren surface back from the shore was covered. A central barren portion was thus surrounded by vegetation, which completely shut off drainage and gave rise to a central lake. He believes that the forest 225 has been continously encroaching on the lake which we know as Lake Drummond.

Darton, in the folio on the Norfolk Quadrangle, which includes a considerable part of the swamp, sets forth quite different ideas. He says that the swamp is all that remains of an old sound or lagoon which was shut off from the sea by a barrier beach so that upon emergence it became an inclosed depression.

Which of these hypotheses is correct, or whether both or neither has played a part, it is not now possible to say. For the present it may be well to note that the swamp is situated in such a position that the surrounding surface slopes away from it to the north, east, and south, in each of which directions there is either a bay or the open ocean, and that the drainage of the area to the west goes north or south so that the swamp is situated on a very low divide. The surface of Lake Drummond, in fact all of the swamp, is only twenty to thirty feet above the sea.

A word as to the work of man in the swamp. It seems that the original area of the swamp was a third to a half larger than at present; that the more favorable parts have been drained and have become valuable farms. Most of this work was done before the middle of the last century. Indeed, in the latter part of the preceding century the Dismal Swamp Canal Company constructed a canal in a general north-south direction from the James River south to Albemarle Sound, and this canal was intended for the use of ocean-going ships. For a time it served its 226 purpose and also made the timber of the forest accessible, but our present overgrown ocean going vessels are too large for this canal.

Probably the most important geographical and geological fact for us to bear in mind is that the swamp is situated on the Talbot terrace, the youngest and lowest terrace of a great terraced coastal plain.

A DIVE INTO THE GREAT DISMAL

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A DIVE INTO THE GREAT DISMAL

“Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds.”

— Tom Moore

This is not a story of the Dismal Swamp; but of a winter invasion of Lake Drummond from the sky.

On December 28, 1920, I flew from Port Washington, New York, to Norfolk, Virginia, in a Curtiss *Seagull,* or flying boat. Lieut. John M. Miller was the pilot. Next day we were joined by W. L. Hamilton, aerial photographer, who came from New York to meet us. We then awaited favorable weather for taking pictures from the sky. On the last day of the year we made an abortive attempt to fly into the swamp but encountered a series of squalls and returned to our anchorage.

On the afternoon of January 1, 1921, I left Hospital Point, Elizabeth River, Norfolk, Virginia, in the flying boat, flew into the heart of the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia, alighted on the dusky bosom of Lake Drummond and returned to the Elizabeth River mooring before dark. I had with me the pilot and the photographer and we obtained sky pictures of this unique and interesting region. So far as I am aware we were the first and only men to reach, and rest upon, the famous lake from the sky.

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I had contemplated this event for more than ten years. But contemplation and finance are as far apart as the poles. Aviation eats up money.

The pilot Miller, the photographer, Hamilton, were both of them noted, able, thoughtful and modest. We took a long chance, but we did not discuss that until after we had returned. A flying boat is not supposed to pass over the land. Nor should it ever do so. Nor should Dewey have cut the cable at Manila, nor Cæsar have crossed the Rubicon.

The plane was a Curtis *Seagull.* The wings had a spread of 42 feet, the engine was a "Curtis 6," I believe, the speed 80 miles an hour.

We were lying in the river off Norfolk. We "hopped off" the moment we thought there was a chance of an hour or two of good weather for getting pictures. We attained an altitude of a little more than 2000 feet, followed the course of the Elizabeth River until we were over the mouth of Deep Creek, when we veered to the westward. We gained altitude as we soared above the Lock of the Dismal Swamp Canal at its terminal at the village of Deep Creek. The 22 miles of the Canal dragged its slow length along almost due south for half its distance, then deflecting to south by east for the rest of the way, far, far below and before us, appearing like a silver ribbon the width of a knife blade. Amid the stupendous clamor of the propeller we signaled to each other that we had made the equivalent of a sailor's land fall. The sun shone fitfully, the wind freshened and 231 cold, vagrant clouds of various hues and density struck us full in the face. As we followed the direction of the canal we rose higher for safety, it seeming incredible that, in an emergency, we could rest our wide seaplane on the canal, which now appeared as a long silver pencil nearly a mile below.

We had, when "ashore," discussed the possibility of reaching Lake Drummond by dead reckoning. I knew the country from experience, as a denizen of the earth, but neither of my companions had ever seen it from land or sky. As the "feeder" that cuts in from Lake Drummond to the canal now appeared in the distance, seemingly as narrow as silver

twine, Miller cut off a corner, reaching for greater altitude as he did so. I began to fear that we'd get no pictures of Lake Drummond—if we ever got there—as sudden mists and wisps of cloud seemed to generate around us spontaneously. Had my bright boy companions known how nervous I now was, they would have been justified in casting the Jonah out of the ship. I held my peace because I had to. Suddenly, in the southwest, through a tender, sun-impregnated mist in which purple, gray and bluish green querously contended for supremacy, I saw a distant, roundish, silver mirror as through a misty veil of lightest gauze. Hamilton nudged me as we glimpsed it simultaneously. He will never know how near I was to fainting as I gulped with nervous delight, the air forced into my eustachian tubes, causing momentary but intense pain. He had been “shooting” pictures all the 232 way with his long heavy aerial camera and continued to shoot as the sunlight waxed and waned. We were now so high in the air that we could visualize almost the entire swamp area.

We reached the aerial periphery of the lake which we could see below us surrounded by somber forests and strange blotches of swamp coloring of many shades, and began to descend in circles. I looked at the intrepid pilot. His face was carved jade. Apparently he could not have moved a muscle for a king's ransom—yet he did not “miss his tip” by the millionth part of an inch.

Thus we spiraled down into Lake Drummond, viewing the dark jungle by which it was encompassed through kaleidoscopic changes of colored mist, the tone of which was lightened where the sun struck through. It seemed as though we were about to intrude upon the waters of the Styx and that old Charon might resent our coming. Hamilton shot pictures as we descended, the time seeming longer than it was. Water from the “Washington Ditch”—the canal built by George Washington—was pouring into the lake like a cataract seething with glistening foam. The mouth of the “Jericho Ditch” was clearly outlined, as was the narrow ribbon which I knew to be the “feeder,” which takes the overflow from the lake and pours it into the canal. Below us we discerned a dun hut, or shack, on shore at the mouth of General Washington's canal and some dark figures rowing a shadowy boat through opaque wavelets. 233 As the sun filtered through the

mist the gaunt skeletons of the ancient cypress trees that haunt the lake toward the shore appeared for a moment as delicately tinted and fragile as the Taj of Mahal in the light of a tropical moon.

As we settled on the surface of the lake as gently as a stormy petrel lights upon the summer sea, the winter sun hid behind a silver tinged cloud and the dark, mysterious and forbidding forest encircled and enfolded us. The water was the color of blood.

Here I must pause and interpolate that of which I learned later. To be observed and not to be able to see that which is looking at you is, to say the least, uncanny and suggests the supernatural. How often in life are men close to real danger, but mercifully unaware of it. They may learn of it months or years later or, as in most cases, never learn of it at all. On January 17, in Norfolk a noted editor said to me:

“I doubt if you know the greatest peril that confronted you when your seaplane rested on Lake Drummond in the heart of the Swamp.”

“What was it?” I asked.

“The danger of being shot. The ‘Great Dismal’ swarms with moonshiners. They are not society people; they certainly do not relish sudden visits from strange gentlemen from the sky. Perhaps you were out of range; but, for the sake of your friends, please don't go there that way again.”

Now, thought I, if either of the Josephs—Conrad or Hergesheimer—had been with us in the *Seagull,* 234 he would have sensed the sinister presence of the makers of swamp potheen and felt their eyes upon him from the mesh of canebrake and underbrush. And, if he deigned to describe it afterwards with his incomparable art, the reader would turn cold and shudder without knowing why.

We rested thus for a while, easing our aerial harness so that we could exchange comments on the scene in low voices, as men talk to each other in a cathedral. Hamilton and Miller took pictures of the lake and plane from bow and wings as it lay on the water. Then we “taxied” around the lake trying to avoid shoal water and submerged snags, which of course could not be seen through the dark red water. Had we encountered one, the *Seagull* would still be in the swamp and the three voyagers—let us say—in Heaven. Then we agreed to start back. Replacing helmets, goggles and paraphernalia, we stayed not on the order of our going, but hopped off and spiraled to the sky. I believe our young pilot circled over the lake to an altitude of something over 4000 feet using the exact tactics of the bee in its manner of returning to the hive. Poised over Lake Drummond at that great height he set his course for Norfolk by way of Deep Creek and doubtless breathed more freely when he saw the broad expanse of water beneath him. Whatever he may have felt, his face was as fixed and immutable as the Medean law.

While resting on Lake Drummond we must have 235 been entertaining an angel unawares. So we did not leave the region without encountering an episode, characteristic and graphic and, to me, exceptionally interesting. As we rose from the lake seeking the sky as one might rise from a vast well, a magnificent bald eagle “swept into our ken.” The glorious creature flew at us, with us, and around us. At times he came quite close. His attitude was one of anger, of curiosity, of aggression. Hamilton with sweep of his arm indicated that he would like to shoot this American emblem in the sky—with his camera. The pilot maneuvered for this purpose and for a moment the bird and the plane were circling around each other like planet and satellite. The action was so rapid, the maneuvering so kaleidoscopic, that the noble bird could not hold his place in the sun long enough for us to shoot him. With a small camera—a kodak—I could have snapped him and I should have greatly cherished his portrait taken 1000 feet above his ancestral home. He evidently did not care to take the 4000 feet level with us and we parted from him with regret.

Lake Drummond is never without its solitary bald eagle. John Boyle O'Reilly poetically describes the death of one he shot there years ago. I have never visited the lake without seeing one.

Scarcely seeming to move, we ate up the South 236 Branch of the Elizabeth at 80 miles an hour and one of us at least breathed a sigh of relief and a sentiment of thankfulness as he crawled out of the *Seagull* after she was again moored off Hospital Point at Norfolk.

To me the keynote of Lake Drummond is desolation. Despite the beauty of its densely wooded shores where wild elm, cypress, juniper and gum struggle for supremacy the general effect of the lake is depressing. As I looked on it from a frail batteau no sail broke the monotony of its dark waters of the somber hue of burnt umber. No sign of life disturbed its solitude if we except an isolated eagle sailing high in majestically graceful circles near its edge. The roughness of the water, out of all proportion to the breeze, added to the sense of strangeness that here affects the beholder. It may be that tradition, playing curious tricks with the imagination influences the mind adversely regarding this strange lake and that, subconsciously, one feels that which he does not see. As I looked out upon the broad expanse of turbulent water the feeling came over me that I had “Passed to the end of the vista,” and that at night this wraith-haunted lake of the Dismal Swamp “Where all night long by a firefly lamp She paddles her white canoe.” 237 must be positively uncanny. In the mind's eye the characteristics of the wild region become distorted until it represents the apotheosis of desolation. This suggestion becomes accentuated as the eye wanders to the shoreward skeletons where, standing grim and gaunt, are seen the naked and time mangled corpses of giant cypresses long since dead. As a rising bank of dark purple cloud throws the lake into deep shadow, mystic words come to me like the burden of a song:

“It was hard by the dim lake of Auber In the misty mid region of Wier It was down by the dank tarn of Auber In the ghoul haunted woodland of Wier.”

Approached from the sky and invaded as we invaded it, the effect on the imagination is enhanced and intensified. It is to me like nothing else to which I can compare it. A sense of unknown dread, of fearful fascination, of being somewhere out of this world held me in thraldom like that of the traveler approaching the doomed House of Usher. The whole region of the Dismal Swamp is one of moods. It seems at times to reach the acme of temperamental personality. It recalls something of Dante's suggested and depicted horrors and then—say in early May—the urbane sun beams caressingly on its unique and lovely verdure and alluring charm, verifying the 238 exclamation of General Washington that “the so-called Dismal Swamp is a glorious paradise!”

THE END

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